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Tommy Graham cleared on suicide

## Scottish row Labour MP suspended

By Jill Sherman and Shirley English

THE Labour MP Tommy Graham was suspended by his party yesterday pending an investigation into local politics in Renfrewshire. But he was cleared of any responsibility for the suicide of fellow MP Gordon McMaster last month.

The Chief Whip, Nick Brown, said that serious allegations remained against Mr Graham that had to be properly investigated. These included that he had worked with a "known opponent" of the Labour Party.

At the same time Labour's general secretary, Tom Sawyer, announced that a task force was being established to investigate three constituency parties in Scotland and that two councillors there were to remain suspended.

The Paisley scandal completely overshadowed the Government's launch of its devolution referendum campaign in Scotland and an historic show of unity by the country's three parliamentary parties.

Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, shared a platform with Alex Salmond of the SNP and the Liberal Democrat Menzies Campbell to push for a "double yes" vote on September 11. But the occasion was hijacked by problems in the west and Mr Dewar was left to combat suggestions that the election campaign had damaged the pro-devolution campaign and suggested that a Labour-dominated Edinburgh parliament would be "Paisley writ large".

Mr Graham, the MP for West Renfrewshire, later confirmed that he had been suspended. But in a statement read by his solicitor, he said that he was delighted to have been exonerated of any part in Mr McMaster's "tragic demise". Mr Graham, who was named in Mr McMaster's suicide note, has denied involvement in a whispering campaign or in spreading rumours that Mr McMaster was homosexual.



Graham "good reasons for investigation"

Mr Brown's statement appeared to support this, saying: "I am satisfied that Gordon was suffering from a severe depressive illness for which he had been receiving treatment over a long period of time and that this, and this alone, was the cause of his death."

However, the statement — authorised by the Prime Minister from his holiday home in France and checked by five lawyers — went on to say that there remained serious allegations that Mr Graham had failed to live up to the standards expected of the PLP. "These allegations relate to verbal attacks on colleagues, unrelated to Gordon McMaster's death. I have concluded that there are serious grounds for investigation to establish whether there is any justification for any of these allegations."

There have also been allegations that Mr Graham has worked with a known opponent of the Labour Party. I have also concluded that there are good reasons why these should be properly investigated. The whole affair has had the effect of bringing the party into disrepute and destabilising local politics in Renfrewshire."

I do of course, make no presumption of guilt, but I have decided that, pending the outcome of the further investigation by the Labour Party which is necessary, it is appropriate that I should suspend

Tommy Graham from membership of the PLP.

The "known opponent" mentioned was Paul Mack, the former deputy leader of Renfrew Council who was suspended by the Labour Party and is now an independent councillor. Mr Mack, who was also reportedly named in the suicide note, called his own press conference yesterday to "clear his name" and call for a judicial inquiry into local politics in Paisley.

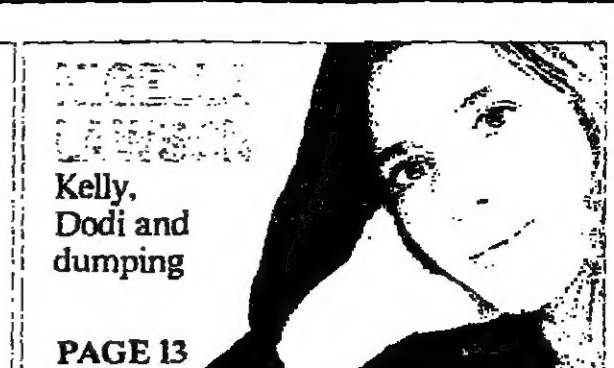
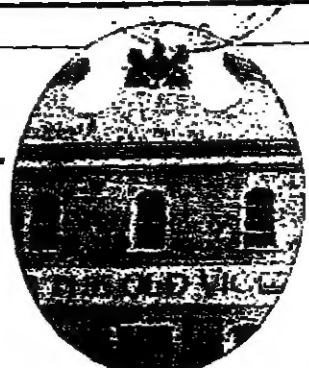
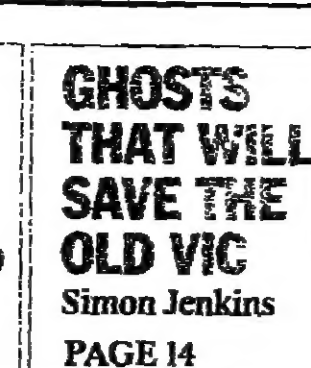
He accused Irene Adams, the Paisley North MP and a close friend of McMaster, for "selective leaking" of the suicide note and denied that he had been involved in smearing the former member for Paisley South. "That Gordon and I were political rivals and indulged in some fairly robust heated exchanges was no secret," he said. "What I had to say to Gordon I said to his face, what I wrote to Gordon I always signed."

"It's perniciously simplistic to suggest that there's some people wearing white hats and there's others wearing black hats. Mrs Adams, with indecent haste within hours of Gordon dying, was phoning the Press and telling them the contents of his letter." It was, he said, "the most degrading, cynical, scandalous piece of political opportunism."

Mr Graham's alleged links with Mr Mack are now to be the subject of a National Executive Committee investigation and Mr Sawyer said that there would also be a full membership check in Paisley South before a candidate was selected to fight the by-election — there had been claims of membership lists being packed with names to try to deselect Mr McMaster.

In the meantime, the Paisley North party would remain unconvinced — as it has been since 1995 when similar allegations were made about attempts to oust Mrs Adams.

Magnus Linklater, page 14  
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The first grapes of 1997 being harvested in vineyards near Bordeaux. Hopes are high that the early start will provide rich pickings for wine producers

## Early harvest points to a vintage '97

FROM BEN MACINTYRE AT CHATEAU HAUT-BRION, BORDEAUX

THE earliest wine harvest for more than a century got under way in Bordeaux this week, raising hopes that 1997 may prove to be one of the great vintages of modern times.

Fully five weeks before the usual start of the vendanges, a group of white Bordeaux wine producers in the Pessac-Leognan region sent workers into the scorching vineyard to begin picking grapes.

The earliest Bordeaux wine harvest on record began on August 15, 1893.

The exceptionally early start is due to a combination of climatic factors: a mild winter, a dry spring, a damp early summer and blazing sun for the last few weeks.

An early harvest is widely seen as the precursor to a bumper crop, since the grapes can be picked at their optimum ripeness and in easy conditions.

The white grape harvest now under way in Bordeaux is already being hailed as remarkable, but the all-important quality of the red wine

will depend on whether the favourable weather holds until the end of the next fortnight, when the picking season for Bordeaux's most prestigious red wines starts in earnest.

If the sunshine continues, the 1997 vintage is likely to be as good if not better than the last two excellent years. If the weather breaks, bringing rain or humidity, then the grapes are likely to rot faster and the resulting juice may be diluted, destroying hopes for a prime vintage.

A sudden change could also cut back the volume of the harvest and raise prices. "It is always a gamble," observed Jean-Bernard Delmas, director of Chateau Haut-Brion, the winemaker which led the charge into the vineyards this week.

Chateau names as Lafite-Rothschild, Petrus and Margaux are likely to follow suit within a few days.

"The precocity of the harvest means this will be a legendary year," the burly and affable wine producer remarked

staunchly as, with almost religious reverence, he watched the first tractor-loads of ripe grapes tumble into gleaming steel vats for crushing.

Such prestigious Pessac-Leognan chateaux as La Tour Marillac and Smith-Haut-Lafite have also begun their white grape harvest this week. The picking in Burgundy and champagne is similarly expected to make an early start, although only be a matter of days.

M. Delmas struck an almost mystical note. "The great vintage of 1811 was marked by a comet. This year we had Hale-Bopp. It's just folklore but who knows, he observes devoutly, adding that the great wines of the 1940s were also the result of abnormally early harvests."

If the grape harvest is half as ripe as the adjectives already being bestowed on it, then 1997 will certainly prove a superb year both for the Bordeaux wine trade and also for British wine buffs, given the current strength of sterling

against the French franc. □ Though 1893 wines were regarded at the time as exceptionally fine for the period, the prices obtained for them by the growers were very low because the harvest came in the middle of a profound slump (Robin Young writes).

Edmond Penning-Roswell, the former chairman of the Wine Society, is one of the few Britons alive to have tasted wines of 1893. Mr Penning-Roswell described the wine as having an extraordinary deep colour and tasting surprisingly young and fruitily sweet in the 1970s.



"Five weeks early this year so it should be a marvellous vintage"

### British 'spy' trawler found

The British trawler *The Gaul*, which sank in 1974 with the loss of 36 lives, was found today. It was involved in spying on the Soviet Union is thought to have been found. Page 2

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### Inmates' easier life 'sop to the IRA'

By Richard Ford and Martin Fletcher

THE Government was accused last night of capitulating to the IRA after eight convicted terrorists and five men charged with terrorist offences were moved out of the most secure jail units in Britain.

They left the "prisons within prisons" at three top security jails after the Prison Service downgraded their security classification from Category A (exceptional risk) to Category B (high risk).

It means they can have physical contact with visitors, use the chapel, library, football pitch, gymnasium, workshops and education facilities and mix with a wider range of fellow prisoners.

Among those no longer considered an "exceptional risk" are the six men each given 35 years last month after being convicted of a plot to bomb London's electricity supply and a man facing a double murder charge in connection with the London Docklands bombing in February, 1996.

The decision to lower the security classification, which means the 13 men will have an easier life in jail, was seen as a government response to Sinn Féin following the latest IRA ceasefire.

sponse among Unionist politicians in Northern Ireland, who accused ministers of capitulating to IRA demands but was welcomed by Sinn Féin and the Irish Government.

John Taylor, deputy leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, condemned the decision, saying: "I do believe the Government is beginning to act recklessly and seem not to be taking the advice of the police on issues of security because it seems to me that the police on both sides of the border remain concerned that there will be a return to IRA violence."

Ian Paisley junior, the Democratic Unionist Party's justice spokesman, said the IRA prisoners would be "penning letters of thanks to Home Secretary Jack Straw" and accused the Government of being "weak on terrorists". He said the downgrading was the first step towards granting republican prisoners early release.

Officially the move to downgrade the security categorisation was a prison service operational decision made by Phil Wheatley, director of the country's top security jails.

A category A exceptional Continued on page 2, col 5



Smith: "I am proud of what I've done"

### Michelle Smith finds gold again

MICHELLE SMITH, the triple Olympic gold medalist whose successes have been clouded by unproven drug allegations, won her first European title in the 400 metres individual medley in Seville yesterday.

The Irish swimmer, who was promptly called for her third drug test in a week, declared: "I'm very proud of what I've done here. I am just going to enjoy the rest of the week." She did not, however, attend the winner's press conference and could be disciplined.

Britain won its first gold medal through Paul Palmer in the 200 metres freestyle. Page 44

### Greenpeace offered olive branch by BP

By Nick Nuttall, Environment Correspondent

THE oil giant BP last night moved to defuse a bitter wrangle with Greenpeace by offering to suspend a £1.4 million court action against the group on condition that its members keep clear of BP's Atlantic oilfield.

The move comes after green activists in 70 countries yesterday pledged to mount a campaign to boycott BP filling stations and goods in protest at its legal action.

Greenpeace has claimed that it only has assets of £180,000 and that the BP suit would bankrupt it.

Yesterday an Edinburgh court granted BP an interim injunction banning Greenpeace Ltd, a ship's captain and two Greenpeace employees from carrying out further actions against BP in the Foinaven field west of Shetland. The field is 28 per cent owned by Shell and 72 per cent by BP.

Mr Richard Keen, QC, counsel for BP, told the court that Greenpeace was one of a number of groups which continually tried to prevent companies from legally drilling for oil.

He said: "There is a continuing course of action carried on by, among others, Greenpeace Ltd, which has involved par-

ties other than the present pursuers, who hold licences in the respect of the exploration for and exploitation of oil in the Atlantic, and also to prevent the pursuers and other parties from discharging their legal right to explore for and exploit mineral resources in these areas."

The court also ruled that Jon Castle, captain of a Greenpeace vessel, was in breach of an injunction not to interfere with BP's *Stena Dee* platform. It was occupied for a week by protesters until they were arrested on Sunday. Mr Castle faces a prison sentence or a fine.

A BP spokesman said: "BP's principal concern is not the recovery of damages. Rather, it is to ensure that its lawful operations are not interfered with and that safety is not compromised. BP has never questioned Greenpeace's right to campaign, but we do object to their employing unlawful tactics."

"BP offers to suspend its claim for damages against Greenpeace and its senior campaigners for so long as there is no further interference with BP's operations in the Atlantic frontier area."

Niki Kortvelyessy, speaker Continued on page 2, col 5

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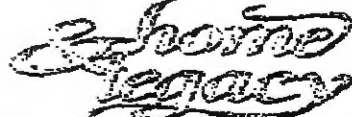
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# Judges say girls must not be sent to adult prisons

By RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

A GIRL of 16 won a High Court test case yesterday when a Home Office policy on dealing with young female offenders sentenced to detention was ruled unlawful.

Two High Court judges said it was wrong for the Prison Service to send females aged between 15 and 21 to an adult jail before deciding where they should serve their sentence. Mr Justice Sedley sitting with Mr Justice Auld are expected to give the reason for their decision later this week.

They were told that the girl, referred to only as F, had spent 15 days in Risley prison, in Cheshire, sharing cells with adult prisoners before being released on bail.

She has now been found a place at Styal woman's prison, one of seven jails with units for juveniles. The others are Brockhill at Redditch, Low Newton in Durham, Drake Hall in Staffordshire, Bullwood Hall in Essex, Eastwood Park in Gloucestershire and East Sutton Park at Maidstone.

The judges ruled that the girl should remain free until a correctly worded committal

warrant naming Styal not Risley had been issued. She had been sentenced to eight months by Accrington Youth Court, Lancashire, on July 29 for robbery, assaulting a police officer, disorderly behaviour and other offences.

Her lawyers told the High Court judicial review hearing that the Home Office had a policy under which all girls were sent to one of five adult prisons for assessment and allocation to juvenile units.

Ian Wise, for the girl, said that under the 1982 Criminal Justice Act, the Home Secretary had the power to direct that "an offender" be detained in a prison or remand centre for a temporary purpose.

The use of the singular, he said, meant that this power should be exercised only in individual cases and in exceptional circumstances, whereas the practice was applied to all juvenile girls.

"This is contrasted with the practice in respect of young male prisoners who are sent directly to young offender institutions," Mr Wise said.

There are, of course, no young offender institutions

specifically for females, only female prisons which have been designated as having a dual purpose for adult and young offenders.

Between 60 and 80 girls under 18 were in custody at any one time. All of them started their sentences alongside adults. This was against the general principle that juvenile offenders must go, not to jail, but to young offender institutions with educational and training facilities to help them to prepare for their return to the community.

Robin Tam, for the Home Office, said the fact that all juvenile girls were sent initially to prison did not mean that their cases were not being individually considered. The prison authorities needed to assess each case to make a rational decision on placement. He admitted that if more juvenile places were available, assessment might not need to be carried out in prison.

There are no young offender institutions solely for young female offenders because there are so few teenage girls offenders in custody.

## Ministers urged to pay student teachers as lure

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

THE Government is considering paying a salary to teacher-training students in an effort to solve the classroom recruitment crisis.

Officials at the Department for Education and Employment have discussed "back-dating" part of a newly qualified teachers' pay, effectively giving them a wage in their final year of training.

No new money would be needed. The qualified salary rate of £14,280 would be split between the final year of training and the probationary year after qualifying, which

the Government proposed in its education White Paper.

Students on the final year of a four-year undergraduate course, or on the year-long postgraduate course, would receive about £5,000. During their probation year, they would get nearly £10,000. Teaching unions are likely to press for a payment closer to the unqualified teacher level.

The payments are believed to be in addition to government plans for bursaries for trainee teachers to help to cover the annual £1,000 tuition fees that begin next year.

Salaries for student teachers will be formally proposed next month by the National Association of Head Teachers in evidence to teachers' independent pay review body. David Hart, general secretary of the association, said the Government had already accepted the principle of paying trainee teachers. Mr Hart said: "There are too many well-paid alternative professions. We need something radical that is going to attract them into training to be a teacher."

Degree vacancies, page 19



A Greenpeace supporter during an anti-drilling protest on BP's Stena Dee oil rig

## TUC to confront Blair on pay and rights

By JOA SHERRMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

TRADE unions are preparing to confront the Government over employment rights, the minimum wage, and NHS privatisation next month. The TUC agenda for next month's annual congress, published today, includes a number of hostile resolutions calling for full rights for all workers from the first day of work, a £4.42 hourly minimum wage, and opposing private finance in the NHS.

The Government faces defeat on all three issues although behind-the-scenes fixers are already trying to hatch compromises on critical motions to avoid embarrassing Tony Blair, who will address the Congress in Brighton next month, the first time a Labour Prime Minister has done so for nearly 20 years.

Insiders are trying to ensure the £4.42 figure disappears from the minimum wage motion, knowing that it is a higher sum than the Government will accept. TUC leaders were relaxed about a resolution by the National Union of Knitwear demanding a minimum wage related to "current industry" pay arrangements. But that motion has now been amended by Unison, the public sector union, reaffirming the 1996 Congress commitment to "a statutory minimum wage based on the formula for half median earnings (which currently gives a figure of £4.42 an hour). The issue of employment rights is another area where trade unionists are prepared to fight.

Almost all the resolutions on workers' rights call for full employment rights from day one for all workers instead of having to wait for two years. John Smith gave this commitment to the TUC when he was Labour leader, but it was overturned by Tony Blair and was not included in Labour's manifesto. Union leaders are confident that Government will move towards their position, although they expect both sides may compromise over one year. Ministers are awaiting a legal judgment from the European Court which is expected to propose employment rights within a year.

The Fire Brigades Union has put forward a motion which demands "that the clear commitment given by the then Labour leader, the late John Smith, to ensure that employment rights would apply to all workers from day one, whether they be part-time or temporary workers, be implemented."

Several resolutions have also been tabled opposing the Government's private finance initiative. Unions are worried that if private firms take over the building and management of NHS services, they cannot guarantee working conditions for their members. Unions are also concerned about reports that Mr Blair intends to delay the introduction of union recognition.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



Nubie: shot in street

## Appeal for calm after drugs shooting

Police appealed for calm among the black community in the Handsworth area of Birmingham yesterday after a teenager was shot dead in the street. Joel Nubie, 18, was the victim of a gangland-style killing in which the killer rode up on a mountain bike and fired a single shot at point-blank range.

Mr Nubie, unemployed, had a conviction for possessing cocaine. It is believed to be the third drug-related killing in recent weeks.

## Spy base plan

The American National Security Agency is to go ahead with its plans to install more "golf ball" radomes at a signals intelligence listening station at Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire, despite concerns about the impact on a designated area of outstanding natural beauty.

## Air fares hope

Manchester airport was yesterday ordered to cut its landing charges by up to 25 per cent in the next five years — a move which could lead to cheaper air fares. The ruling was made by the Civil Aviation Authority in response to criticism by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

## Alarming trip

A Suffolk family whose burglar alarm drove neighbours to distraction while they were away will be welcomed home by a £300 bill. After three nights the local council was called in and officials decided to break in to the house in Lavenham. The bill is for a locksmith and carpenter.

## Lottery restraint

The introduction of the mid-week National Lottery draw has not encouraged people to spend beyond their means, the lottery regulator Oflot said. Three quarters of households play weekly but those with the lowest incomes are least likely to play twice a week, the survey found.

## Girls arrested

Three girls — one 11, the others 13 — have been arrested by police investigating a burglary in which a woman aged 33 suffered a five-hour ordeal in which dye was poured over her. An 18-year-old man has also been arrested. All are from West London.

## BP offers peace

Continued from page 1  
of the European Federation of Green Parties, said they were organising an international boycott of BP goods and services.

"The Green Party in Britain might not worry BP much. But like them we are an international body and wield considerable influence in many countries, in particular in Germany, the country that brought most pressure to bear on Shell during the Brent Spar episode."

In 1995 when Greenpeace mounted its campaign against Shell and its dumping of the Brent Spar, Shell's products were boycotted and some filling stations on the Continent were firebombed.

Ulla Bellion of Friends of the Earth said yesterday that one of their reasons for backing Greenpeace was concern over the threat to non-violent protest if BP won its action. Tony

Juniper, campaigns director at Friends of the Earth, said yesterday that the BP action could backfire and compare it to the so-called McLibel court case in which McDonald's successfully sued two campaigners for defamation. Although the food company won its case, some observers felt that it lost the public image war.

"It is a fine judgement whether you take the McDonald's route or you have a more constructive dialogue," Mr Juniper said.

The Greenpeace campaign against BP is part of a wider protest against exploration and drilling in the so-called Atlantic frontier.

Greenpeace reacted last night to BP's offer by describing it as a "climbdown". A spokesman for the group said that "BP appeared to want to negotiate when there was nothing to negotiate".

## Prisons

Continued from page 1  
risk inmate is one who is considered to "pose a danger to the public, the police or the security of the state" and who has links with organisations with the resources and ability to launch an armed attack on a top security jail.

A prison service spokesman said that Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and Joyce Quin, the Prisons Minister, had been informed of Mr Wheatley's decision.

The spokesman added: "The move is based on a reduction in security risk and follows thorough assessment by the Prison Service in consultation with the police."

The decision also means that there is not a convicted IRA terrorist or person facing an Irish-related terrorist charge in one of the special secure units at Full Sutton jail near York, Belmarsh in Woolwich and Whitemoor near March in Cambridgeshire.

As a result of the decision the Full Sutton unit is to be "mothballed" but the Prison Service said it could open immediately if required.

Last week the Irish Government resumed its programme of early releases for republican prisoners, freeing two men convicted on relatively minor charges.

## Trawlers net wreckage thought to be 'spy ship'

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

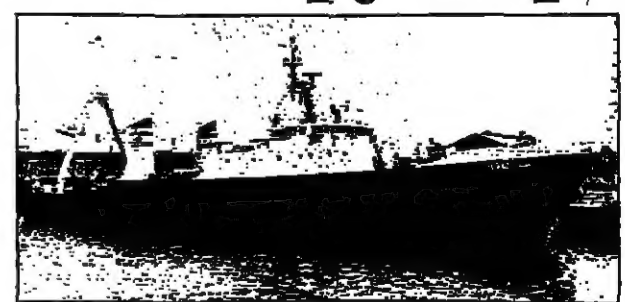
A BRITISH trawler which sank with the loss of 36 lives amid accusations that it was involved in spying on the Soviet Union is thought to have been found 60 miles off the Norwegian coast.

Two British trawlers fishing in the area last week netted what is believed to be wreckage from *Gaul*, which vanished in 1974. A lifeboat cover was also found.

A Channel 4 film crew and a Norwegian broadcasting company hired a ship and diving crew to find the wreckage. Divers in a mini-submarine took nearly three hours to locate the wreckage 270 metres below the surface.

Video footage shot by the Norwegians is thought to show the name plate of the trawler, "Gaul, Hull". It is not yet known whether a salvage operation will go ahead.

Relatives of the lost seamen accused the British authorities of covering up details of the sinking. It was claimed that a Soviet submarine was responsible for the tragedy. An inquiry dismissed relatives' claims that the ship was a disguised intelligence vessel, or that it had been seized by the Soviet Union.



Gaul went down in 1974 with the loss of 36 lives

However, many of the bereaved relatives continued to believe the boat did not sink accidentally. Some insisted their loved ones were being kept prisoner in Siberia, or that their remains had been buried in unmarked graves in the then Soviet Union. Their bitterness was intensified by the low level of compensation after a legal wrangle, the 29 dependants of the dead shared a total of £16,000.

The Ministry of Defence has always insisted that the trawler was not involved in spying, although British fishing ves-

sels are thought to have been used to take photographs of Soviet ship movements at the height of the Cold War in the 1950s and 1960s.

All but four of the 36 crew came from Hull. The other four were from the South Shields area of Tyneside.

Max Gold, a Hull solicitor who acts for some of the victims' relatives, said the discovery offered a glimmer of hope that they might one day be able to draw a line under the episode. Questions that could now be answered included why and how *Gaul* sank and what happened to the crew, as well as whether it was involved in gathering intelligence.

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# Shocking? Not us, say artists as Academy issues health warning

Nude, limbless sex dolls are not for faint-hearted as the 'boring'

RA strives to create a show called Sensation. Dalya Alberge reports

FOR the first time in its 229-year history, the Royal Academy of Arts has felt obliged to display health warnings for anyone entering its latest show.

The faint-hearted will be alerted to the shocking nature of a sculpture featuring limbless, nude pre-pubescent girls with penises for noses and sex-doll orifices for mouths when it goes on display next month.

It is the work of the British brothers Dinos and Jake Chapman whose names have become synonymous with sensation and good prices in the world of contemporary art. They have said that they do not set out to shock and that their work "is based on a lot of intelligent conversation".

The RA show, titled *Sensation*, has already caused controversy because it will also include a portrait of the Moors murderer Myra Hindley — created from thousands of handprints of two children. Hindley and her victims' families are campaigning to have

the picture removed, leading to the latest planned exhibit, *Michael Boylston*, a member of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, said: "It's the RA's job to show what's fashionable and academic but all this stuff is more old hat. Once they are trying to be original, but being desperately boring."

The brothers' work, *Zygotic Acceleration: Bio-genetic D-Sublimated Libidinal Model (Enlarged x 1000)* could be the most controversial work ever shown at Burlington House, a far cry from the genteel Summer Exhibition or lavish Impressionist shows staged by the bastion of tradition.

It is likely to outrage, if reactions to its showing in a commercial London gallery in 1995 are anything to go by. The police decided to pay a visit, and the dealer Victoria Miro screened off her shop window. A Victoria Miro spokesman said that they fully expect these fibreglass mutant mannequins to cause "trouble" at the RA.

The brothers Chapman are among Britain's bright young things whose art is avidly purchased and vigorously promoted by Charles Saatchi, Britain's foremost collector of contemporary art. He is liaising closely with the Royal Academy in picking out works for the loan exhibition opening on September 18.

The Chappmans — like many of the artists collected by Mr Saatchi — are no strangers to controversy. One critic has said: "These boys make Damien Hirst look like the Angel Gabriel. Jake and Dinos Chapman specialise in the art of the repellent. Rotting cows are tame by comparison." Another has noted that they "revel in gore, mutilation and pre-teen sex".

Others hail them as masters, glorifying their depiction of horror to Goya's *Disasters of War*. Jake, born in Chel-



Jake Chapman, below, and his brother Dinos with one of their sculptures: Their work "is based on a lot of intelligent conversation"



Saatchi: helping in choice of works

ham in 1966, and Dinos, born in London in 1962, graduated from the Royal College of Art and have collaborated together since 1991. The police are among their regulars: they attracted the attention of the vice-squad last year with a pornographic film attacking an Italian dealer who had banned a pair of their mannequins with genitalia in strange places.

Their spokesman explained that they were so upset, they reworked the piece to feature a severed head of the dealer: they gave him a penis for a

nose and featured it as a prop, a sex toy, in the movie which they made with professional porno actresses. He stressed that the Chappmans do not set out to shock.

Jake Chapman said that there are "any number of ways" to interpret their work. Seeing the mutant figures as "a genetic experiment that's gone wrong — or right" is one approach.

September is their month: apart from the RA show, they will be at the Victoria Miro Gallery, and in New York, at the Gagosian Gallery, which

they are planning to convert into "a mass graveyard littered with skulls and overlooked by zygotic sculptural figures". Prices will range from £16,000 to £40,000.

The RA is undoubtedly expecting to cause a stir — if only in its choice of the show title *Sensation*.

Philomena Davidson-Davis of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, expressed concern: "I do think museums and galleries such as the RA ought to think very carefully about the face it's presenting to the public — particularly as this is

getting more and more offensive.

"We've got to draw the line somewhere and say stop."

A Royal Academy spokesman said: "There are a few works in the exhibition which may be shocking and the Royal Academy will be taking appropriate steps to alert visitors to these so they can use their own judgement as to whether they wish to see them or not."

"There will be a few works that will be shocking. But there are over 110 works by 40 artists and the Chappmans are

only two on show." The brothers' last extensive exhibition was staged at the ICA last year. An ICA spokeswoman said yesterday: "We were very careful to make people aware before hand. We showed Westminster Council, for example. We showed them and established a legal situation. We also put a sign on the door of the gallery which said —

"Some visitors may find the content of this exhibition disturbing."

She noted that the ICA's audience is less shockable than the Royal Academy's.

## Passion for plastic lowers the gold standard

By Peter Foster

GOLD credit cards, which once guaranteed instant attention from hotel managers, Savile Row tailors and West End restaurateurs, are fast losing their shine.

Banks have taken to handing out such symbols of wealth and prestige to allcomers, according to a survey published yesterday.

The numbers of gold cards have more than trebled from 800,000 in 1993 to more than 2.5 million by the end of last year. Today more people own gold cards than draw the dole.

The chief culprits in this devaluation of the gold standard appear to be banks hoping to entice new customers by flattery, offering them the status once conferred only on the seriously wealthy.

William Elderkin, of the analysts Datamonitor who compiled the report, said banks were switching to the gold market in response to greater competition in the credit card business.

"The explosion in the number of gold cards is inevitably undermining their exclusivity," he said.

The minimum income for a gold card has been frozen by many issuers for the past four years. A salary of £20,000 is thought sufficient to be eligible. For some this may be thought dangerously close to the national average wage of £17,000.

While their poorer cousins enjoy the dubious kudos of elevation to the gold set, heavyweight spenders have graduated to Platinum or Premier cards which retain some last vestige of the influence wielded by the gold card in its early days.

The American Express platinum card is strictly by invitation only and the chosen few pay £375 a year for the privilege.

## Asian employed white woman 'for the image'

By Kathryn Knight

AN ASIAN company director employed a white woman so that his business would present a positive multi-cultural image, an industrial tribunal was told yesterday. But he forced her to resign because his Asian clients disliked taking orders from her.

Linda Johnson, a 45-year-old personnel manager, said Dhiren Doshi, head of Doshi Professional Services, told a colleague that in his culture she would "never be treated as an equal".

In a "calculated act" to widen the company's market, Mrs Johnson said she was asked to pose for a promotional brochure in a false role and ordered to appear in a video of a mock board meeting. In reality, her role on the board had gone to an Asian man, she told the tribunal in Croydon, south London.

Mrs Johnson, a mother of three who is claiming unfair dismissal due to racial and sexual discrimination, told the tribunal that she joined the company on a £25,000 salary in December 1995. She had previously worked in personnel at Harrods and at Alders of Croydon.

The company, based in Norbury, south London, was an umbrella firm covering a range of in-house services, including financial advice and wine distribution, given to

clients for a monthly fee. Mrs Johnson said most of the clients were Asian, as were three quarters of the staff, but she was paid much less.

She said her Asian male peers were paid between £5,000 and £20,000 more than her, and drove Mercedes or Ford Mondeo company cars while she was given a secondhand Honda. She had also been denied access to a pension scheme and private health care, which was afforded to her Asian male colleagues.

In March 1996, Mrs Johnson said, she was demoted without reason. "I was told to report to a male Asian who had previously been consid-

ered as a fellow employee with equal status," she said. "I can only conclude that the way I was treated was because I was a white female."

She said she was forced to resign with a £3,500 pay-off, but this payment had been stopped when Mr Doshi heard she was making a claim to the tribunal.

Giving evidence to the tribunal, Mr Doshi denied racial and sexual discrimination and said Mrs Johnson had fabricated her claims to make money out of the firm. He claimed she had blackmailed him by threatening to take him to a tribunal unless he gave her up to £40,000.

The hearing continues.



Mr Doshi said at the tribunal that Mrs Johnson had fabricated her claims to make more money



## Channel pallet man swamped with offers

By Stephen Farrell

THE Scotsman who tried to row the Channel on a wooden pallet yesterday reaped the first dividends of national attention.

After drying his clothes at his brother's home in Portsmouth, he received calls from Franklin Bath, "career outplacement" specialists, Harley Street dentist Lawrence Gault and the offer of a one-year season ticket from Sea France ferries.

The former Royal Signals lance corporal lost four of his front teeth, food, driving licence and photographs of his four children when he was nearly rammed by a tanker while paddling across the Channel. He attempted the crossing because he did not have enough money to buy a ferry ticket in Calais.

"It all sounds very promising. I went to a dentist in Portsmouth this morning and they said I would have to wait until the end of September on the NHS," he said. "I still feel pretty exhausted but I'm far more optimistic than I have been for the last few months."

## Polo firm faces cruelty charge

By Lin Jenkins

A POLO company may be prosecuted over the death of two valuable thoroughbred horses.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is carrying out post-mortem examinations to confirm that the horses died from one of the most common forms of poisoning during the summer — eating ragwort.

One of the animals, a teenage gelding, was found lying dead against the barbed wire fence of a field in Lightham, Surrey. Another, a mare aged about eight, was so ill it had to be put down immediately. Two other horses connected with Magna Carta Polo were taken from the field. They were staggering and disorientated in a manner associated with ragwort poisoning. Polo

ponies can be worth from £4,000 to tens of thousands of pounds.

Police called in the RSPCA after they were alerted by a neighbour to the appalling state of the polo ponies in a field riddled with ragwort and bracken. Both are harmful to horses, and ragwort comes under the Injurious Plants Act, allowing the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to serve clearance notices. However, there are few instances of landowners being forced to get rid of it.

Martin O'Sullivan, an RSPCA inspector, said: "All animal owners have a duty to look after their animals and if one becomes ill or dies as a result of neglect, we will investigate."

The ownership of the horses has not been established, but all were connected with Magna Carta Polo of Windlesham,

Surrey, run by John Horswell, an Old Etonian and respected polo player. Mr Horswell, 43, said that his staff always made sure that the fields were free of ragwort. "It is bracken poisoning. Some horses get a taste for it. There is nothing you can do about bracken, it is endemic to this area."

Buff Crisp, secretary of the Hurlingham Polo Association, said that the welfare of ponies was taken extremely seriously by those running the sport. "We have a welfare officer in every club in the country and take the abuse of ponies as a very serious offence. We are unaware of this incident but will be asking the RSPCA for the details." He said that Mr Horswell was a respected member of the polo scene. "He does an awful lot to help the youngsters."

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## Nurses in Saudi case suffer over 'guilty' rumours

By MICHAEL THEODOROU  
AND DANIEL MCGRORY

THE two British nurses accused of murdering an Australian colleague in Saudi Arabia are said to be close to mental collapse as they plead with the authorities to deliver a verdict after reports that they have been found guilty.

Rumours that they have been convicted have reached Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan in their stifling and crowded cell. British consular officials will visit the two in the Dammam central prison today and are pressing the Saudis to allow a British doctor to examine the women in an effort to have them moved to better conditions.

Jonathan Ashbee, brother-in-law of Mr Parry, said: "These women cannot take much more. We are in the dark, the Foreign Office has been unable to discover what happens next, but the mental torture for the two of them is quite intolerable."

The Saudi authorities maintained their protracted silence yesterday about whether their case had been referred to a higher court for sentence. Speculation in Saudi Arabia is that the women's case has been passed to the Court of Cassation.

Mr Ashbee said: "Our lawyers say this could mean the judge has referred it because the decision is outside his remit, or they are deciding whether their forced confessions should be allowed. At worst, it means that court will pass sentence."

Both women have denied murdering Yvonne Gilford, a staff nurse stabbed 17 times in her bedroom, in the hospital complex where they all worked.

Ms Parry, 38, from Alton, Hampshire, is already receiving psychiatric treatment and Ms McLauchlan, 31, of Dundee, is weak with sickness and diarrhoea. Both are said to be unable to sleep for fear of being beheaded if found guilty.

The Foreign Office said last night: "The Saudis have not told us anything, but we are making frequent and urgent inquiries."



Veterans Geoff Larkin and Len Berry sitting astride a Mark I in front of the larger Mark II at the Teesside Training and Enterprise Council near Middlesbrough

## Salute to courage of human torpedo

Exhibition of last missile recalls  
their vital role in helping to  
destroy might of Hitler's navy



Navy frogmen preparing for a torpedo attack. The crews volunteered for dangerous missions

A RESTORED Second World War human torpedo went on show to the public for the first time yesterday.

The battery-powered Mark II — a missile packed with explosives and two frogmen — is the only one of its kind. It was discovered at Portsmouth docks by Robert Hobson, whose father, Lieutenant-Commander Robert Hobson, helped to develop the missile and took part in several missions.

The Mark II is on display at the Teesside Training and Enterprise Council near Middlesbrough, where it was restored. There is also a model of a Mark I.

Both torpedoes were submarine-launched, but in the Mark I version the crewmen sat astride the torpedo as it was fired. In the Mark II they were inside the missile, with their heads sticking out, to make it more streamlined.

Once they reached their target ship the nose of the torpedo, containing the explosive charge, was released and attached like a limpet mine.

The men would then beat a hasty retreat with the remainder of their craft.

The pilots were equipped with screw-on helmets and gas masks. The primitive oxygen cylinders had to be self-contained to prevent tell-tale bubbles escaping.

The torpedoes could reach a speed of eight knots and helped to destroy more than 250,000 tonnes of enemy shipping. They also gained vital intelligence on enemy positions and delivered spies behind enemy lines.

The restored Mark II is a testimony to the perseverance of Mr Hobson, who first became aware of the story of the human torpedoes when clearing out his late father's house. Through personal papers, Mr Hobson tracked down two other torpedo pilots, Lieutenant-Commander Geoff Larkin and Petty Officer Len Berry, and four years ago unearthed the remains of the last torpedo.

Mr Larkin and Mr Berry were at yesterday's unveiling. "They asked for volunteers for special and hazardous missions," said Mr Larkin, 79. "I was in America at the time and volunteered principally so I could return to England and get married. I soon realised why they had the saying 'Never volunteer for anything'."



One of the missiles being readied for launch

Mr Berry, 33, said: "It is great to see one of these back in business. It is right that their place in history is recorded."

Mr Hobson, who has established the Chariots Trust aimed at preserving submarine history and hopes to set up a museum to display naval

artefacts, said: "I am a little sad that I never got to speak with my father about his missions, but that was the way of these men. They never spoke of their bravery. 'Finally there is something which displays what these men did. You only have to look at this contraption to recognise the bravery of the men who operated them.'"

The last surviving Royal Navy destroyer from the Second World War, HMS Cavendish, is being sold by South Tyneside council to a Malaysian firm to become part of a museum.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

## Cut-price 'green' fridge for the poor

Up to 50,000 eco-friendly fridges, priced at £25 rather than £120, are to be offered to low-income households as part of a government scheme to increase the uptake of energy-efficient devices. The units do not contain CFCs, the coolants that damage the ozone layer. Alex Goodwin, of the Energy Saving Trust, which is backed by the Environment Department and the electricity companies, said the fridges could also reduce risks of food poisoning among the infirm and elderly.

### Silent Fashanu

John Fashanu, the former footballer cleared of match-fixing, defended his decision to remain silent at his trial. He told *Hellol*: "Because I wasn't guilty of anything, I felt no need to say anything." He declined to say why he opened a bank account in someone else's name and why money was supposedly paid into other people's accounts on his behalf. "It's private, but entirely legitimate," he said.

### Tax clamp

Ten vehicles were clamped in London streets as patrols began a campaign against road-tax evasion. The owners must produce a valid tax disc and pay £68 to have the clamp removed. Vehicles are towed away after a day and the penalties increase until, after five weeks, unclaimed vehicles are crushed or sold. Road-tax evasion is costing the nation £175 million a year in lost funds.

### PC jailed

PC John Walters, 33, of Peckham police station, south London, was jailed for three months for assault. He repeatedly beat, with his truncheon, a 19-year-old man who had sworn at him and hurled a brick to the ground. Eric Edwards had previous convictions that included threatening to kill a policeman. The judge said that nevertheless "the law has to be seen to be even-handed".

### Boys cleared

Three boys aged 11, 15 and 16 were cleared by magistrates of burning down two adjoining schools in Plymouth after the prosecution offered no evidence. A solicitor representing one of the boys said after the hearing at the city's youth court: "It was a rush to justice. They got the wrong three." Leigham junior and infant schools, which were destroyed in April, will cost £2.4 million to rebuild.

### Sea safety move

The Coastguard Agency and the Marine Safety Agency are to be merged next April to give better marine safety and environmental protection, the Government said. There could be about 15 job losses among administrative staff, but none is likely to be from redundancy. About £500,000 could be saved, but Glenda Jackson, junior Transport Minister, said that was not the main reason for the merger.

### Short-changed

Sixteen million bank customers out of the 61 million with current accounts receive no interest on credit balances, according to a report commissioned by the Abbey National. Two-thirds of the 12.5 million who are paid interest want higher returns for bigger balances. Nearly half of those questioned, representing eight million accounts, were being charged between 5p and 10p a month for being overdrawn.

### Bird beats record

An attempt to set a British land-speed record failed when a bird was sucked into the engine of the jet-powered vehicle. Colin Fallows averaged 248.27mph over the quarter-mile run at Elvington, near York. His car is 29ft long and powered by a Rolls-Royce jet engine taken from an RAF Gnat aircraft. Mr Fallows, 47, said he would make another attempt on the 259mph record, set 17 years ago.

## Pet-food poultry is sold to shops in £3m fraud

By RUSSELL JENKINS

ENVIRONMENTAL health officers believe they have uncovered a nationwide conspiracy by rogue meat dealers to pass off hundreds of tons of condemned poultry as fit for human consumption.

A team of officers from Rotherham council in south Yorkshire launched an investigation last year into the alleged illegal trade, worth £3 million, in chicken and turkey breasts that were sent to rendering plants to be turned into pet food. They believe that more than 1,500 tons of tainted meat may have been illegally reclaimed and found its way via companies in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Sussex on to shop shelves.

The meat is said to have passed through a number of middlemen and retailers before reaching the shops. The council said that the supermarket chain Kwik Save is believed to have unwittingly stocked the meat through franchisees or suppliers.

The meat involved is that from animals which may have

died on farms or on the way to slaughter. The corpses are categorised as "dead on arrival" for pet food only. However, the carcasses were plundered to retrieve prime cuts for human consumption. Chicken costing 2p a pound as offal at the beginning of the meat-laundering process could attract prices of about £1.20 a pound in the shops.

The investigation has resulted in 17 meat dealers being charged with conspiracy to defraud and conspiracy to sell unfit food. Another 20 butchers will face prosecution on charges related to the receipt and sale of the meat.

A spokesman for Kwik Save said that fresh meat sections of their stores were all run by independent concessions in accordance with stringent company guidelines. "While it is the responsibility of the manager of each concession to adhere to these guidelines, regular checks are made by Kwik Save to ensure that quality and hygiene standards are maintained. Should standards at any time be compromised, Kwik Save would take immediate remedial action."

The British Poultry Meat Federation, which represents the turkey and chicken industry, said it was appalled at the revelations. Peter Bradnock, the chief executive, said: "The poultry industry obeyed the laws and condemned these carcasses in the processing plant. I am horrified that carcasses sent to an outside company for rendering as pet food have found their way back into the human food chain. It is illegal and cannot be condoned. Fortunately it is an isolated incident, but extremely serious."

## Parents see red over fourth new United kit this year

By RICHARD DUCE

A PLEA for cheaper children's replica football shirts was made yesterday after Manchester United decided to launch its fourth team strip this season.

United, the most commercially successful club in the world, is to launch the strip for the side to wear in the Champions' League. Should the club fail to progress in the competition the strip, retailing at £40, may be worn only six times.

Sheila Spiers, the vice-chairman of the Football Supporters' Association, said yesterday: "Manchester United is certainly exploiting the market. It would not be so bad if children's sizes were much cheaper."

News of a fourth strip was

not greeted warmly by parents whose children support Manchester United. James Beaumont, of Sale, whose son, Marcus, eight, is a keen United fan, said: "We've drawn the line one shirt each year."

Maxwell Brown, 11, from Ashton, in Lancashire, said: "If they are not careful, kids like me are really going to lose faith in the team. We just can't afford to keep up. I've been earning a little extra by doing the dishes for my mum, so if I keep it up maybe I'll have enough to buy the shirt. Then again, by the time I've saved up there'll probably be another one out."

The replica football kit industry is worth £200 million. Umbro, which makes Manchester United's shirts in an £11 million deal, said:

"Rather than exploiting fans, we are giving them an opportunity to be a commensurate United's appearance in the most important European competition."

Football, page 41

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# Record sales keep Britain cool

If your loved one is blowing hot and cold, blame it on the heat and join the queues for a fan or an ice-cream, reports Emma Wilkins

RECORD purchases of ice-cream, electric fans and air-conditioning units are helping Britain to cope with what could be the hottest August for 300 years.

The hottest places yesterday were Heathrow and Birmingham, where the temperature reached 31C (88F). But thunderstorms brought cooler temperatures and flooding in the West, including Swindon where parts of the town centre were under 3ft of water. Fair Isle had the lowest temperature of 16C (61F).

The high humidity is putting strain on relationships already tested by the school holidays, according to Relate, the marriage guidance organisation. "Summer holidays can be a stressful time for couples," Julia Cole, a spokeswoman, said. "Spending time with the

family can magnify problems. The hot weather makes this worse: because people are stressed out they are less likely to be patient and more likely to snap at their partner."

Working late may no longer be a sign of a conscientious employee: air-conditioned offices are an attractive prospect compared with a sticky journey on public transport to a home filled with fractious partners and children.

Sales of desk fans have hit record levels, according to retailers. B&Q reported sales of 17,000 fans over the weekend in its 283 branches. At one branch of the hardware chain Robert Dyas in the City of London,

181 desk fans were sold last week.

Air-conditioning at home remains a luxury enjoyed by only the wealthy, with a full air-conditioning system for a large four-bedroomed home costing £20,000 to install. Mobile units can be bought for less than £1,000 from DIY and hardware stores, but they cool only one room at a time.

The National House Builders' Federation, which represents 80 per cent of homebuilders, said air-conditioning was not fitted as standard in any new homes. However, the Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association reported a growing interest in domestic air-conditioning. "People such as man-

aging directors, who have air-conditioning in their offices and their cars, are increasingly expecting to have it in their homes," a spokesman said. "People's expectations are rising: they want to know why they shouldn't feel more comfortable at home."

Lonex Ltd, a heating systems company based in Hampstead, northwest London, said inquiries about domestic air-conditioning had risen since last summer. Roland Perring, the managing director, said his clients were generally rich and successful business people.

"We are getting more and more inquiries from customers but they tend to be people who live in the more flash properties in Hampstead," he said. "In the whole of last

year we fitted three houses with air-conditioning and this year we have already done two. It would cost in excess of £20,000 for a full system in a big Hampstead home."

"Air-conditioning is still regarded as a nice extra luxury. My office is air-conditioned and I've had it in my car for years. This year, I must admit, I have actually thought about putting it in my home for the first time."

Hamptons, the estate agent which is selling a development of 14 £295,000 flats in Fulham, southwest London, said air-conditioning was not fitted as standard in new properties. Apartments at The Square, in Parsons Green Lane, have beech floors, special dimmer-light systems, double-glazing and video entry phone — but not the cool

air so vital in the summer. "A lot of American clients think it is a great shame that the new flats don't have air-conditioning," Zoe Goddard, of Hamptons, said.

"The demand is there for it, but it's still very rare to find it even in newly built flats. People who work in air-conditioned offices really miss it at home. I have gone out and bought myself a unit for my flat for £2,000 — it's wonderful," she added.

Some respite from the discomfort is expected for people living in the West with cooler weather forecast for the next few days. But temperatures in London and the South are expected to remain high until the weekend at least, according to London Weather Centre. A spokesman said that if the present

temperatures continued, it would be the hottest August since records began in 1659.

Manchester had a more pleasant temperature of 29C (84F) while south coast resorts, which were cooled by sea breezes, experienced temperatures of between 24C and 27C (75F to 81F).

Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales were also enjoying their share of the sunshine with the mercury hitting 28C in Glasgow, 25C in Belfast and 26C in Cardiff.

Ice-cream sellers were celebrating the hot weather after a "painful" June. Increased demand in August looks set to push sales up to a record £200 million this year compared with £120 million last year, according to the Ice-Cream Alliance.

## Drivers burn their fingers in fight to beat the heat

MOTORISTS who want a respite from the heatwave will find that the ten coolest cars on the market are also among the most expensive.

Sales of cars with air-conditioning have risen fivefold in the past year with manufacturers such as Nissan and Vauxhall basing advertising campaigns on cooling equipment, now displacing the sunroof as Britain's favourite motoring accessory.

Although carmakers are dashing to sell air-conditioning either as an extra or as standard equipment, Lease Plan, one of Europe's biggest company car providers, said yesterday that motorists had to pay top prices for systems best able to combat the sweltering heat.

It rated the Mercedes S600 as the car to keep cool in this summer — at a price of more than £100,000. Only one model in its top ten — the Renault Megane Scenic — is below £18,000, with the rest in the luxury or executive class.

Steve Dunn, Lease Plan's commercial director, said: "Britain is still behind the times slightly on air-conditioning."

"The concept is in its infancy in this country, where we have only recently started to have these hot summers, unlike the United States where cars have had air-con for years and the need for maintenance and service is understood."

"The quality of air-conditioning varies enormously and there is no doubt the best systems are usually on the most expensive cars."

Drivers who hire cars at holiday destinations such as Florida are often taken aback at the contrast between air-conditioning in American models, which blasts a freezing gale into the passenger cabin almost as soon as the ignition key is turned, compared with the tepid air which leaks from the vents of cars at

Air-conditioning is fast replacing sunroofs as the essential summer car extra, but systems that deal with the heat do not come cheap, say Kevin Eason and Adrian Lee

home. British buyers have traditionally been put off air-conditioning because it needs engine power to drive the refrigeration system, often leading to a marked increase in fuel consumption, particularly in small-engined models.

When air-conditioning systems were fitted to Hillman Hunters for sale in the Middle East 20 years ago, they demanded so much power that the car's top speed dropped by about 20mph.

Air-conditioning was once considered a luxury; in 1990, only a quarter of models were fitted with it. Today, almost half of new cars have it and that figure will rise to two thirds by 2000.

Carmakers now test their air-conditioning equipment in the Arizona desert, where temperatures can reach 50C.

Al Clarke, spokesman for the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, says air-conditioning is the new status symbol. "In London, particularly, it has become a style thing."

"Motorists with air-conditioning take great delight in sitting at the lights with their windows closed, watching drivers without air-conditioning sweltering and breathing in fumes."

The best systems, costing more than £1,500, are fully automatic and rely on sensors on the passenger and driver sides of the cars. The driver selects the desired temperature with the press of a button and chilled air is pumped to

the front and back of the car. Cheaper, semi-automatic systems, work in a similar way but the temperature is set by a dial on the dashboard. Those basic systems can cost between £400 and £1,000, pumping out chilled air from dashboard vents.

However, they are unlikely to be able to cope with the sort of extreme temperatures which have baked Britain for the past month.

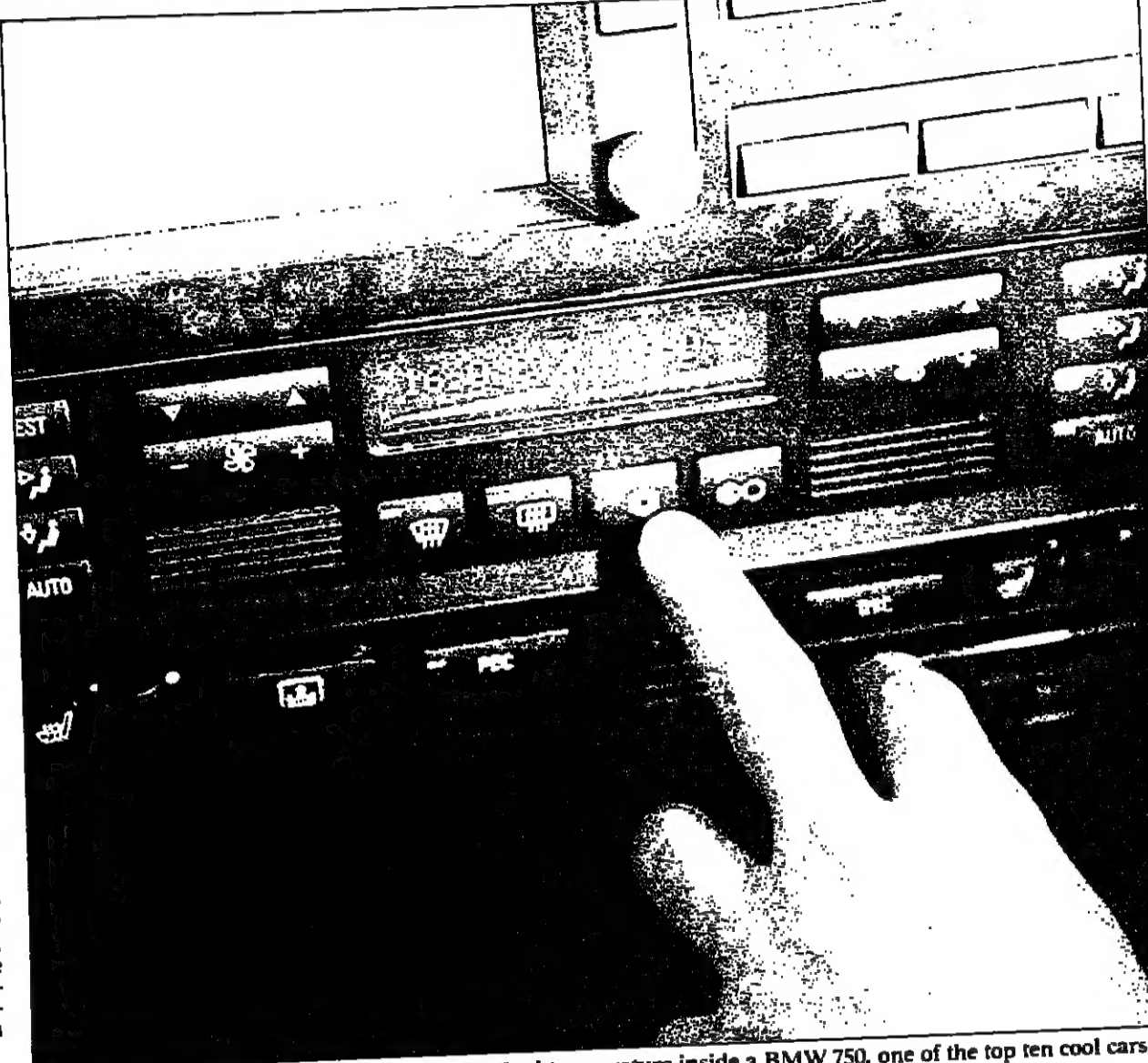
Peter Rawlinson at Chrysler, whose Jeep Grand Cherokee is in the top ten, said: "In the States, people won't buy a car without air-conditioning. The British were more reluctant to embrace air-conditioning but that is changing."

The marketing men appear to be winning the struggle to convince the British car buyer that air-conditioning is a benefit all year. It prevents misting and, with the windows shut, the driver can hear the radio.

As yet, no one has officially tested the different units available in Britain but there was admiration for Audi's solar panel system.

At a cost of more than £1,500 — plus a minimum of £35,000 for the car — it pumps fresh air into the car when it is parked, allowing the air-conditioning to chill the car more efficiently when the engine is switched on.

Air-conditioning in Ford, Nissan, Toyota and Chrysler's middle-market cars was also rated highly by their rivals. Nissan, makers of the Almera, offers air-conditioning as stan-



Shooting the breeze: a driver selects the desired temperature inside a BMW 750, one of the top ten cool cars

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### THE TOP TEN COOLEST CARS IN BRITAIN

1. Mercedes S600	Price: £102,490	Super luxurious limousine with double glazing and a climate control system among the most powerful of any car in the world
2. BMW 7-series	Price: £36,935 to £73,455	One of the most sought-after executive cars which BMW boasts has as much computer power on board as the Space Shuttle
3. Volvo V70	Price: £18,970 to £28,720	Re-designed by Englishman Peter Horbury, the sleeker Volvos offer creature comforts as well as traditional ruggedness
4. Audi A8	Price: £35,205 to £54,410	Sleek high-tech BMW challenger with all aluminium body and new solar powered air-con system to keep the car cool while the driver is away
5. Lexus LS400	Price: £35,205 to £54,410	The Japanese car (made by Toyota) which challenges the Mercedes for technical proficiency. Air-con system similar to that in Jaguar and Nissans
6. Audi A6	Price: £25,205 to £34,410	Just launched in Britain as a challenger in the BMW 3-series sector, with radical new designs and high equipment levels, including standard air-con
7. Jeep Grand Cherokee	Price: £25,205 to £34,410	Big, brash challenger to Range Rover which brings USA-cooling power to Britain, generated via a meaty range of engines, from 2.5 to 5-litres
8. BMW 5-series	Price: £25,205 to £34,410	Acknowledged by many pundits as the best car in the world, packed with high-technology, with easy-to-see dashboard including sophisticated air-con system
9. Vauxhall Omega	Price: £25,205 to £34,410	Executive cruisers much favoured by travelling senior managers who need to keep cool on the motorway between important appointments
10. Renault Megane Scenic	Price: £25,205 to £34,410	Europe's Car of the Year which combines practicality with comfort, emphasising systems such as air-conditioning which keep the family cool on holiday trips



# Cycle wheels turned a leisure revolution

The advent of the train and the bike brought a new freedom that helped urban masses to escape the drudgery of the working week, writes **Damian Whitworth**



BEFORE Victoria's ascent to the throne, leisure time was rare for those at the bottom of the pile: drudgery was punctuated occasionally by religious festivals and drunken release in the gin shop. But the nation's rising prosperity bought spare time for many more of the population.

In part, the change was prompted by altruistic reformers, but there was also a commercial element: a happy and properly rested workforce was a productive workforce. That is not to say that life was easy. For the new industrial working class, hours were still long and conditions often harsh. But Factory Acts in the 1840s and 1850s reduced the length of the working day and many people were given a half day off on Saturday in addition to Sunday.

There were further cuts in the working day in the 1870s and the Prince of Wales set an example when he became more flexible about forgoing revelry on the sabbath, and threw parties on Sunday eve-

nings. The many thousands living cramped together in urban environments created a boom in public entertainment, with drama, opera and ballet flourishing in grand new theatres, and the music hall drawing huge crowds.

Perhaps the biggest change in the way that the population spent its free time was the stampede to escape the towns. The advent of the railway gave birth to the day trip and the extended holiday. Resorts sprang up all around the coast at the end of railway lines.

Queen Victoria possibly did more than any other individual to create the British tourist industry. Her trip to the west of Scotland in 1847, for example, inaugurated the holiday industry in the area. Her sojourns at Osborne House

began a tradition of royal promotion of the Isle of Wight, which continues today with the Royal Family's annual visits to the Cowes regatta.

The railway was not the only way to explore the countryside. Cycling quickly gained popularity once a model had been created that did not threaten serious injury to both rider and pedestrians.

Initially the adventure of the bicycle lay not in the new vistas that could be explored but in managing to stay in the saddle. After unsuccessful predecessors such as the pedal-less hobby horse, the boneshaker was invented in 1868. This had wooden wheels and iron tyres, and the pedals that made it the ancestor of the modern bike. It did not have a chain, however, and the ped-

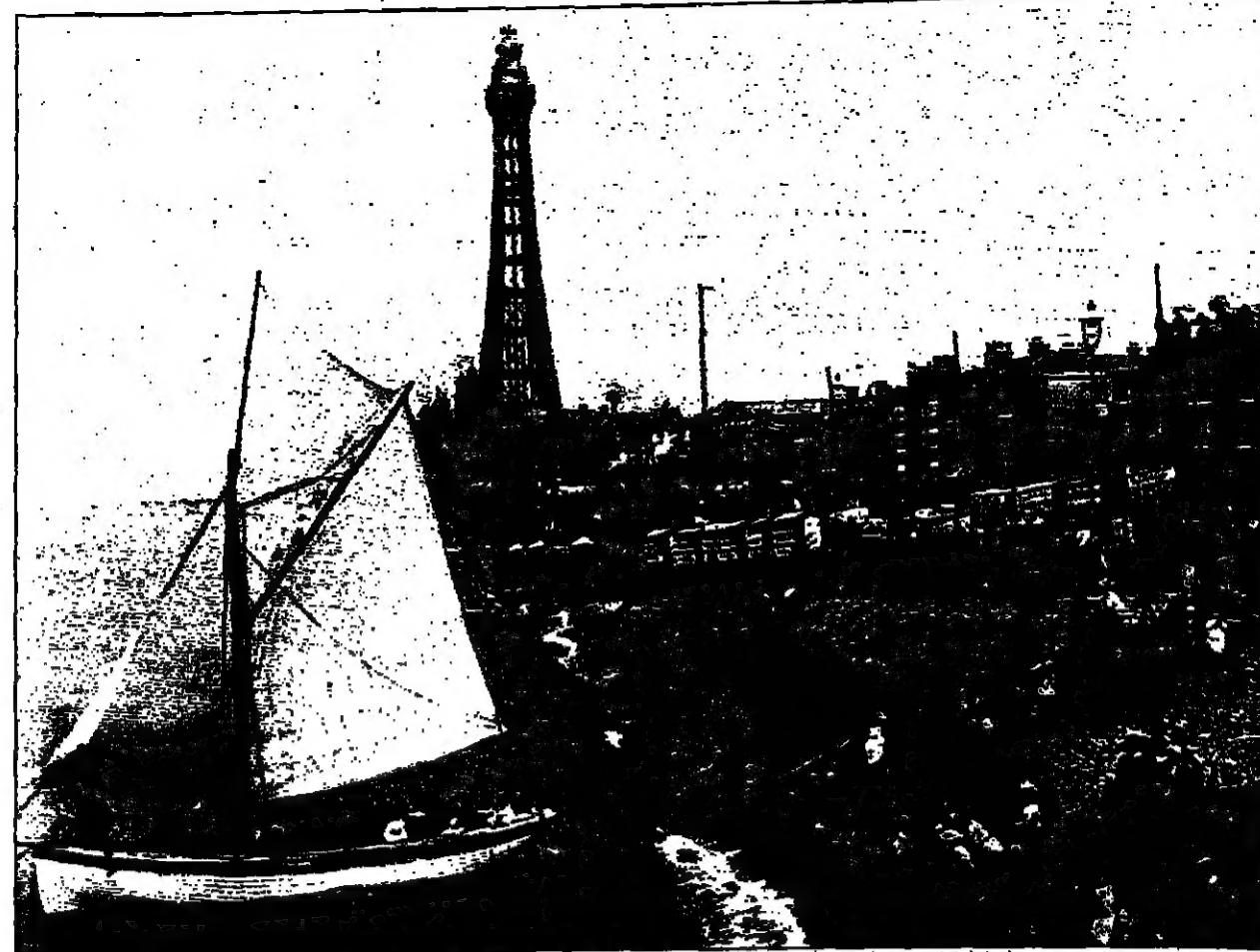
als were attached to the front wheel, which made descending hills particularly hazardous. The boneshaker was followed by the ordinary, better known as the penny-farthing, which required the rider to sit a perilous 5ft above the ground while weaving along the highway.

The first modern-looking machine was Mr Stanley's Safety Bicycle, produced by Rover from 1885. It had wheels of equal size, pedals and a chain. When Dunlop introduced pneumatic tyres in 1888, the success of bicycles was assured.

Cycling clubs sprang up across the land, with groups talking to roads that motor cars had yet to turn into dust-tracks.

By the late 1880s, cycling had become modish among women, after a revolution in undergarments that had been partly inspired by the desire to pedal with modesty intact. Thick petticoats were ousted by knickerbockers, at first long and frilly so that if a glimpse of them were caught they might be mistaken for petticoats. The freedom of movement they afforded made them an important contribution to women's emancipation.

For those without the time, inclination or financial ability to escape the towns and cities, the creation of public parks provided open spaces for recreation. Association football and rugby gained mass appeal and W.G. Grace's



Never a dull moment: Blackpool in the 1890s, when the tower was the world's second highest building

## The seaside outing that never stopped

**Blackpool's old heart is beating fast, says Damian Whitworth**

A HUNDRED years ago, Blackpool was already the boldest, brashiest seaside town in Britain. Victorian entrepreneurs created a resort dedicated to the pleasure of the masses. Their vision was so strong, that holidaymakers are still flocking to enjoy the attractions.

William Flimster-Sankey, of the Victorian Society, says "Blackpool is still packed with people dancing, only now they are stuffed into discos and amusement arcades. The principle is still there - if there were any principles."

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Lancashire town was a watering hole for gentry who rolled up in their coaches for a bracing dip. When Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, it had just 730 occupants. At her death in 1901, it had 48,000, not counting the summer pilgrimages.

The railway had arrived in 1846. Soon the Lancashire and Yorkshire line began running cheap excursions. The cotton industry had established a practice of giving employees annual holidays, so when mills closed for summer breaks, the seaside landladies opened their doors and tens of thousands of people saw the sea for the first time.

Not content just to frolic beside the sea, the Victorians wanted to walk on it. The first of the three great piers at Blackpool was the North Pier, constructed by Eugenius Birch, the leading light of pier building, in 1863. While the

stronger than any yet experienced on that coast.

The tower instantly became the trademark of Blackpool. It was built as a landmark to the sea, and the view from the top was said to be the best in the world. The tower is, in fact, a circular, although animals no longer roamed. On a rainy, mid-week summer afternoon the ornate, hallmarked design of Frank Matcham, who also designed his style and gold leaf paint on the Hackney Empire, London, Palladium and Blackpool's thriving Grand Theatre - is packed.

Today the tower and the Winter Gardens are still owned by Michael Grade's First Leisure. A century ago they were locked in competition. The glass dome of the Winter Gardens could be seen by passengers as they disembarked at the station. Boardings boasted "enter at once and see a most magnificent sight. Today the glass dome is a pop concert, entertainment, party conferences and tournaments.

The odd dance hall may have disappeared, theme parks and amusement arcades may clog the streets, but Blackpool was always about cheap fun. In among the more modern monstrosities, the spirit and some of the Victorian glory remain.

Blackpool Tower, open daily 10am-11pm. Admission £5. Family ticket £15. Circus £2 extra per person. Admission to the Winter Gardens is free. Show prices vary.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Violence on flight forces jet to land

A charter jet carrying 235 holidaymakers to the Canary Islands made an emergency landing in Faro, Portugal, after a passenger reportedly became drunk and violent. Portuguese police were called to the Britannia Airways Boeing 757 and took the man from Newcastle, into custody. The airline said that it would consider suing him for the cost of the diversion.

#### Lake inquiry

Police studied aerial photographs of Coniston Water in the Lake District and used sonar tracking equipment in an attempt to identify the body found in the lake last week. The body of a woman in her twenties, dressed in a nightdress, is thought to have been in the lake for about 25 years.

#### Beating law

Teachers hitting pupils became a criminal offence in Ireland yesterday, 15 years after corporal punishment was banned. The move was welcomed by Ireland's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which also called for a legal ban on corporal punishment in the home.

#### Dunblane roses

Two new varieties of rose were planted in Dunblane, named in honour of the primary school teacher and her 16 pupils murdered in the town. Gwen Mayor, a hybrid tea rose, and Innocence, a bushy patio variety, were bred in Aberdeen. Money from sales will go to Dunblane charities.

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THE TIMES WEDNESDAY AUGUST 20 1997

# Sale row over playing fields put out to grass

A decaying sports ground where London's children played is a test case against development, writes John Goodbody

THE playing fields which were once the pride of the Inner London Education Authority are to become the first test of the Government's policy to stop the sale of sports grounds needed by schools and communities.

The 86-acre Priest Hill sports centre in Ewell, Surrey, deserted for 15 years, once boasted 30 hard tennis courts, 18 football, nine rugby and eight hockey pitches, eight cricket squares and extensive athletics facilities. The site is one of a number of former

sports centres around London, owned by the authority, on which millions of schoolchildren, including Linford Christie, Daley Thompson and John Barnes, used to play. But whereas the others have been preserved, Priest Hill fell into disuse in 1982, when schools stopped transporting pupils from the capital and the fields became surplus to educational requirements.

Although local schools and clubs are eager to rent the facilities, the new owners are reluctant to grant long leases

in case redevelopment plans are restricted. In the meantime, gypsies and vandals have invaded the grounds, dumping rubbish on the overgrown grass and ruined tennis courts. Trespassers have wrecked the pavilion and groundsmen's houses.

After schools stopped using the site, ownership was transferred to the Greater London Council and then to the London Residuary Body, set up to dispose of GLC property. In 1987, Adrian Stonebridge, a local tennis coach, ran a series



The 86-acre Priest Hill site in Ewell, Surrey, has suffered from vandalism and years of neglect

of lessons for children but the LRB would not agree to a long-term commitment. In 1989, Priest Hill was sold for almost £2 million to Combined Counties Properties of Esher, which

has subsequently tried to put together a series of redevelopment plans, one including a golf course and hotel, which would be financially viable and satisfy green belt regulations. Planning permission for the golf course has now expired.

The Sports Council and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council both admit that the "wasted acres" of Priest Hill are an unfortunate victim of legislation and red tape. Alan Silcock, southeast senior regional officer with the Sports Council, said: "Fifteen years of playing sport has largely been lost and still no one knows whether the site will be developed or not."

The situation has frustrated schools and residents. Peter Brooks, headmaster of Kingswood House, Epsom, said that he was seeking new playing fields. Martin Patmore, the manager of Glyn ADT technology school, said that his school might like to lease part of the site.

Karen Sanders-Mallard, whose house borders Priest Hill, said: "We are fed up. In my nine years here, I once saw some polo being played, but nothing else."

Richard Harris, the borough community services officer, said that the council was still looking to Combined Counties Properties to put together a package which might include some commercial development but respected the green belt. No one from Combined Counties Properties was available for comment.

A spokesman for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport said that the situation was negotiable. Planning controls — including the policy to halt the sale of playing fields — would be taken into account if any plan was called in by the Department of the Environment.

The National Playing Fields Association said yesterday that at least 250 acres of recreational land had come under threat from developers since last autumn. The association wrote to Tony Banks, the Minister for Sport, last week urging the Government to list important playing fields on the same basis as conservation areas.

## M25 jambuster runs head-on into opposition

AA says route guide is dangerous, writes Peter Foster

AN ENTREPRENEUR who became so fed up with sitting in traffic jams on the M25 that he produced a guide on how to avoid them has been attacked by motoring organisations and residents living on the alternative routes he suggests.

M25 Guide, written by Neil Atkinson, a former computer software salesman, details routes for skirting congestion on the road that has been called Britain's biggest car park.

It ran into immediate opposition from the Automobile Association when it was launched yesterday. The organisation said it would endanger lives, creating dangerous rat-runs through outlying towns and villages. "We're not happy with this book at all," an AA spokesman said. "It will be dangerous because the majority of accidents occur on non-motorway routes, and increasing traffic off the M25 will just lead to more congestion and pollution in these rural areas."

People living on one of the alternative routes in Surrey, the A3044 in Staines, joined the AA in condemning the guide. Stephen and Louise Gomm, who live on the edge of the advised detour between junctions 13 and 14, said the guide would increase traffic noise and pollution on an already busy road.

Mr Gomm said he was particularly concerned for his eight-month-old twins, Leonie and Alexander. "You can see



The guide could be the first of a series

the black pollution collecting on the window sills. The twins were three months premature and could well do without the additional fumes. Personally, I wanted the M25 scheme to go ahead. Now it's collapsed, they have just shoved the problem on to somebody else."

Their views were echoed by Thora Hall, who has lived on the road, to the west of London, for 31 years. "People don't consider other people any more," she said. "The noise is so bad we can't sleep some nights. If it gets any worse we'll have to shut the windows, but you can't do that in the summer."

Lorraine Goodall, whose house backs on to the busy dual carriageway, said the guide would encourage motor-

ists who had not used the road before to do so. "It is busy in rush-hour but only people who know about it take this route. With this guide things can only get worse."

Mr Atkinson, 29, from Newcastle upon Tyne, invested £40,000 in the project. Yesterday he defended his idea. "My book is just a cheaper version of satellite navigation systems already available," he said. "I understand the AA's concern, but we've been careful to use dual carriageways wherever possible and to avoid rural areas."

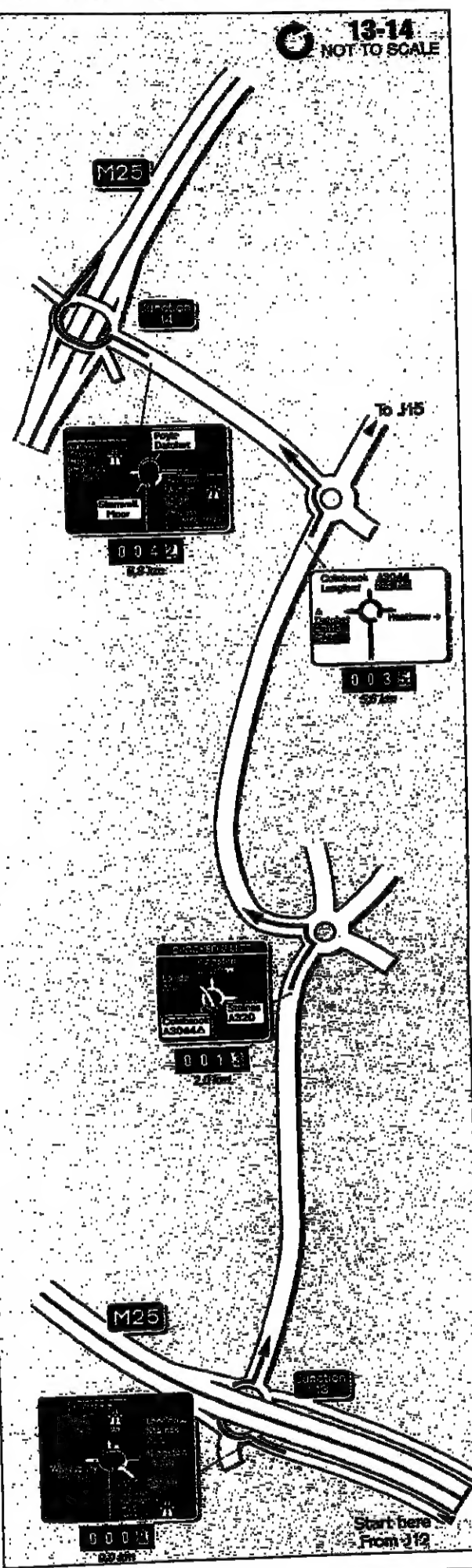
The idea for the guide came to him while he was working for a company in London. "I spent hours sitting on the M25 wasting time and money. A normal road atlas was too cumbersome and lacking in detail, so I decided to launch this," he said.

The guide, which costs £4, will be available from garage forecourts, bookshops, and newsagents. If it proves to be a success, Mr Atkinson plans to tackle other motorway pressure points, such as the M6 around Birmingham.

AA Roadwatch, page 22



Stephen and Louise Gomm say the guide will increase traffic on an already busy road



### SIX-MINUTE DETOUR BEATS QUEUES

Yesterday *The Times* conducted its own road test to see how effective the M25 Guide is. Finding the traffic jam was easy: as we approached junction 13, near Staines, the overhead warning signs indicated trouble ahead. Preferring the wind in our hair to crawling along in temperatures above 80C, we opted for the alternative route spelt out in the guide, which uses photographs of

road signs and simplified maps. The route, which is clearly marked with red arrows, took us first on to the A308 to Kingston for 1.3 miles. We turned sharp left at the Crooked Billet roundabout on to the A3044 towards Colnbrook. The next roundabout took us back to junction 14. The 4.2-mile detour (three miles on the M25) on free-flowing dual carriageways took six minutes.

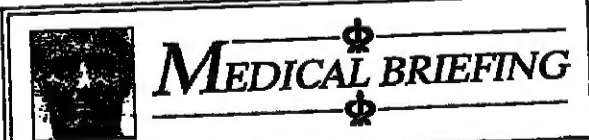
## Getting to the root of what can make hair all white in a night

THE hair of Julie Walters, the actress, turned white after it was found that her daughter, Maisie, had lymphoblastic leukaemia. Her partner was also reported to have gone grey, although Walters concealed the change by dyeing her locks. Maisie is now doing well, and has been in remission for three years.

Stress can hasten the ageing process and there is no doubt that people go grey earlier as a result of anxieties and tragedies. The claim that severe shock has turned patients grey overnight is always met with scepticism by doctors as there is no obvious scientific explanation for it. There are, however, well-documented cases and, despite doctors' scepticism, the phenomenon is not only in the imagination of ghost-story writers.

One explanation could be that pigmented hairs are less firmly rooted than grey hairs, and therefore fall out more readily in the event of fright or disaster. The remaining hairs could then be responsible for the apparent acquisition, overnight, of a full head of grey hair.

Hair colour is the result of differences in the melanin pigment. In black and brown hair the pigment is tyrosine-melanin, while redheads and



Dr Thomas Stuttford

blonds owe the colour to the pigment pheomelanin. Dark-brown hair differs from black hair only because of the different size of the melanin-containing cell whereas light-brown hair is a mixture of different types, some contain-

ing the pigment found in blond hair and others that of black hair. Very bright red hair is the result of the person's hair having an iron-rich pigment, trichosiderin. Grey hair is caused by a loss of pigmented cells, and the age at which this happens is genetically determined. Grey hairs may sometimes be found in children. My grandfather was completely grey while a medical student at Cambridge and my mother had white hair before she was 30.

A greying head is soon accompanied by changes in the beard and later the body hair. The more the body hair is exposed to light the sooner it goes grey. Hair exposed to sun by an open-neck shirt goes white before that on other parts of the chest usually kept covered. Eyebrows and eyelashes tend to go grey last of all.

Many diseases affect the colour of the hair, and sometimes hair is white when it regrows after patchy baldness. Waardenburg's syndrome is the condition that accounts for streaks of hair, so obvious in the case of Indira Gandhi. The white tuft made the late Prime Minister of India instantly recognisable.

Chloroquine, the anti-malarial which is blamed by expatriates for so many ills, can occasionally cause depigmentation of the hair, but only in blonds and redheads. Brunettes are able to retain their lustrous colour in spite of their weekly dose of chloroquine.



Julie Walters went grey after her daughter's illness. Indira Gandhi's streak followed her own ill-health

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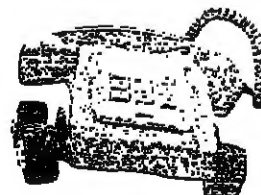
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# Jury says implant firm hid risks

A JURY in New Orleans has found that a major chemical company did not properly test its silicone breast implants for safety in humans, paving the way for potentially massive payouts in compensation to thousands of women, several of them British.

The jury also found that the company, Dow Chemical, deliberately concealed information about the risks to women's health posed by the silicone in the implants.

The finding comes in the first-ever class-action suit brought against a breast implant manufacturer by women alleging silicone-induced injury. The case involves claims made by 1,800 American women. If successful, the precedent could assist up to 10,000 British women, all of whom have registered private claims against a clutch of American companies, in securing compensation. Although this is only the first stage in what promises to be a long court battle, the jury's finding is a big setback for Dow Chemical, which owns half of Dow Corning, at one time America's largest implant producer. Dow Corning has filed for bankruptcy.

Dow Chemical has reacted furiously to the jury's decision, arguing

Massive payouts may follow a US ruling that health risks of silicone were kept secret, writes Tunku Varadarajan

that the design, testing and manufacture of the breast implants were done by Dow Corning alone. John Musser, Dow Chemical's director of public affairs, said: "The company had no way of knowing which silicone compounds were to be used in medical implants."

Matters have been complicated by the fact that Dow Corning will be left out of the present case until the separate bankruptcy proceedings have been resolved.

However, the women who filed the original lawsuit welcomed the ruling. Peggy Muscarel, one of the plaintiffs, said: "The doctors we went to — they think we are nuts. This proves we're not nuts."

The case now moves to the second, forensic phase, which promises to be even more complicated than the first, five-month phase. Next month the jury will have to

decide whether the injuries which the claimants allege are directly attributable to the silicone in their breast implants and not to any other cause. Furthermore, the women will have to convince the jury that they would not have undertaken breast surgery had they been fully aware of any risks involved.

The women have not sued for specific damages, as the law in Louisiana requires plaintiffs to file for unspecified compensation. The size of the award is determined exclusively by the jury. If successful, however, the case could reap billions of dollars for the claimants.

An indication of the potential size of the compensation comes from Dow Corning's 1994 offer of a global out-of-court settlement of \$4.25 billion (£2.6 billion). That offer failed to attract enough takers, with women arguing that it was insufficient. It was made when the company was in a stronger legal position than it is now.

The jury's finding that the manufacturer suppressed information relating to risks is likely to inflame that figure still further. There is a strong likelihood, also, of punitive damages being assessed against the manufacturers.



Palestinians set up camp on the Mount of Olives in protest at the Jewish state's confiscation of their Israeli identity cards. Israel has been taking away their cards if they make their homes outside east Jerusalem, thereby losing their right to live in the holy city

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## Israel threatens to retaliate for rocket barrage

FROM ROSS DUNN IN JERUSALEM

THE Israeli Prime Minister gave a warning of severe retaliation if Lebanese Hezbollah guerrilla fighters continue attacking civilian areas along the northern border of the Jewish state.

Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking yesterday during a tour of Kiryat Shmona, one of the towns hit by Katyusha rockets fired from southern Lebanon into the Galilee region of northern Israel, said: "The immediate task is to halt the cycle of escalation which does not serve the interests of any side. We want quiet on both sides of the northern border so that Israeli and Lebanese citizens can conduct their lives peacefully."

He said: "However, Israel will respond severely to any attacks on its citizens and I hope that this message — in all its implications — will be understood by the other side."

The Katyusha rocket barrage came in two waves: the first, at 7am, fell all over the Galilee, and the second volley, about 1½ hours later, hit only western Galilee. In all, about 40 rockets landed, slightly injuring three people, but caused considerable damage to buildings and power lines.

Mr Netanyahu held Syria, the main political power broker in Lebanon and which has 30,000 soldiers inside the country, responsible for failing to prevent Hezbollah from launching the attacks. "There has to be every effort by Syria,

which controls Hezbollah, to stop these firings," he said.

Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Islamic militant group, said the attacks were in revenge for the clashes in Lebanon on Monday in which at least nine people died and scores more were injured. Then, for the first time in more than a year, the Lebanese city of Sidon, came under artillery attack by the South Lebanese Army (SLA), an Israeli-backed local militia. Israel has admitted that the attack was the sole initiative of an SLA commander and was wrong.

The SLA attack led Beirut to condemn Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon. Faris Bouze, its Foreign Minister, said yesterday: "The Israeli occupation of the south is a very negative situation for Israel. The south is a real Israeli Vietnam," he said in reference to America's troubled involvement in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s. "The only way for the Israelis to stop this problem is to fully withdraw from southern Lebanon."

Mr Bouze also accused Mr Netanyahu of trying to sabotage Middle East peace agreements. "He is trying to end, or to terminate the Oslo agreement and at the same time he is trying to change the nature and the goal of the eventual mission of [US] Secretary of State Madeleine Albright — trying to talk about security and not hear about politics."

## Dodi Fayed dines out on anonymity

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

UP CLOSE and personal, the heir to the Harrods fortune looks older and grayer than when viewed through the telescopic lenses of Italian paparazzi.

Dodi Fayed, suffering no doubt from jet lag, was barely recognisable when he wandered over to our table at the new Spago in Beverly Hills within hours of touching down in California.

He wore a beige linen suit with a Nehru collar, and the wary look of a fox who had found temporary refuge from the hounds of Fleet Street. Had he known he was stumbling into a *Times* Magazine interview with Wolfgang Puck, the restaurateur, and his wife, Barbara Lazaroff, he might have backed away.

Instead, he thanked Mr Puck for his meal and offered no comment on the legal battle being waged against him by a model who claims they were engaged until last week. No comment either, on reports that an Egyptian woman in a Canadian jail may be responsible for at least 19 other lawsuits filed against him in California's courts.

Mr Fayed may be faulted for his media silence, but not for his power-lunching instincts. There is probably no restaurant on earth where he could have been more confident of being surrounded by customers more famous than himself than Mr Puck's establishment on North Canon

Drive, Spago Beverly Hills, which opened in April, has a menu to deter all but millionaires and agents on expense accounts. (If you have one, try the shaved summer truffles over roast Maine lobster.)

It was also designed specifically to cater to film stars' erratic seating whims. John Travolta and Hugh Grant like to face the perimeter of the dark interior courtyard for virtual invisibility. Ms Lazaroff confided, Marvino Davies, the oil tycoon and sometime owner of Paramount Pictures, goes indoors for warmth.

Mr Fayed ate lunch in a side booth with the actor Christopher Lambert and barely turned a head.

His pursuit of privacy in America has been made easier by a striking lack of interest in his romance with Diana, Princess of Wales, among local media. The lawsuit filed against him by his former girlfriend, Kelly Fisher, has been greeted with mirth, but also shame at such a vintage case of litigiousness run wild.

As one local reporter yelled at Gloria Allred, Miss Fisher's lawyer: "Beautiful young women are always being led halfway up the aisle and then jilted. What's so special about your client?" The attorney and her client disappeared to regroup. The story has featured on the local television news as a purely comic item.

Nigella Lawson, page 13



# Survivor of the Titanic finally arrives in US

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

MILLVINA DEAN, an 85-year-old woman from Southampton, has finally got her foot in the American house that would have been hers had the Titanic not gone down in 1912. Only nine months old when she was bundled into a sack and lowered to a lifeboat, she was the youngest survivor.

"I can't bear cold drinks — the iceberg, you know," said Miss Dean when offered a chilled glass of cola at the home in Kansas City, Missouri. "Perhaps some champagne, though," she said, after a pause.

A retired secretary, Miss Dean was received warmly by the Levi family, who live in "her" house. "Welcome home, Millvina," said Matt Levi. "It is all completely unreal to me," confessed Miss Dean. "I never thought for a minute that I'd ever be here."

In 1912, Miss Dean's father, Bertram Dean, sold his London pub in order to move to America. He had dreams of a better, richer life, free from the drudgery of pulling pints and sipping beer-drinkers. His goal was to set up a small tobacconist's shop in Kansas

City, where a cousin, Alfred Norbury, had moved in 1871. Cousin Alfred had wonderful stories to relate and the public was in no doubt that the salubrious American Midwest would be a better place for his young family than the fetid East End of London.

The Deans' dreams, however, crashed sharply into an iceberg. Bertram died, America unseen, when the Titanic sank. Miss Dean's mother, Georgina, and her older brother, Bertram Jr, were among the survivors rescued by the Carpathia.

After a wretched fortnight in a New York hospital, she returned to England, moving to Southampton. Miss Dean has lived there ever since, never marrying and always stammering. Her mother remarried some years after the tragedy, dying in 1975 at the age of 95.

Miss Dean has had a rollicking time since her arrival in Kansas City on Sunday. She has been fêted by the Lewis family, who live at the home of the descendants of Cousin Alfred and been to see the local steamboat museum. Next, she wants to go to Nebraska to see the home of Jesse James, her "favourite outlaw". On Monday, how-



Eighty-five years after her journey began Millvina Dean is met by Matt Levi, left, and his wife, Katie, at the house that was to have been home



Millvina Dean as a baby in her mother's arms in 1912

ever, came the *pièce de résistance* of her visit: Emanuel Cleaver, the Mayor who made her an honorary citizen of Kansas City in 1993, held a civic reception for her. As the cameras flashed and local journalists milled around, she maintained her poise and basked in the attention.

Stalling, she told one reporter that she would only be seeing "the first half" of the forthcoming film on the sinking of the Titanic.

Miss Dean, who travelled to America on the QE2 and plans to return on the liner later this year said: "I love the sea. I never had any emotions about the Titanic. I was too young,

for one thing. I didn't know my father, and my mother never spoke about it."

It was not until she was eight years old that she learnt what had happened to her father. Because of this the Dean family story was not widely known to members of the Titanic Historical Society until 1987, when Miss Dean attended a memorial service for disaster victims in England.

Today she has become the most public face of the disaster. As such, she is of vast interest to the more than 5,000 members of the society. One of them is Michael Rudd, head of Kansas City's Travel Market-

ing Associates. Mr Rudd arranged Miss Dean's Kansas City visit after locating the home on Harrison Street in the city's Hyde Park section.

Miss Dean is one of the last of a dwindling band of Titanic survivors and is by far the most energetic. With the death in January of Edith Haisman, aged 100, the number of survivors is now down to seven. The others are: Barbara West, of Plymouth; Louise Laroche, of Paris; Michel Navratil, of Montpelier; Eleanor Shuman, of Elgin, Illinois; Lillian Asplund of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts; and Winifred van Tongerlo, of Warren, Michigan.



An artist's impression of the sinking of the Titanic

## Quinn 'beat wife over his affairs'

New York: The son of Anthony Quinn, the actor, has told a court that when his mother mentioned her husband's extramarital affairs his father would hit her until she had bruises on her arms.

Danny Quinn, 33, also an actor, was the first witness in what threatens to be a bitter divorce hearing. He said the trouble usually started at the dinner table. "My mother would say something about his extramarital affairs... Then he'd throw something — dishes, glass — at her, and sometimes he'd hit her."

The 52-year-old winner of two Academy Awards and his second wife of 30 years, Italian-born Isabella Quinn, 62, are fighting over Quinn's assets — which are reportedly worth at least \$20 million (£12.5 million) — in Manhattan Supreme Court. Quinn now has two children by Kathy Bervin, 35, his former secretary.

## Fury as Montserrat islanders flee volcano

BY DAVID ADAMS IN MONTSERRAT AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

POLICE with riot shields broke up a demonstration on the island of Montserrat yesterday, dispersing a mob protesting about overcrowding in housing for refugees from the island's volcano.

The protesters set up roadblocks and demanded information about a promised voluntary evacuation assistance package from Britain, said Eugene Skerritt, the permanent secretary to the British colony's Chief Minister.

"The situation in the country is extremely tense," he said. "There is a certain sense of loss. Tempers are getting pretty high."

The demonstration came as the Soufriere Hills volcano erupted again, sending up a 10,000ft ash cloud. Officials were expecting further eruptions.

Claire Short, Britain's International Development Secre-

tary, said yesterday that a voluntary evacuation from the island would go ahead tomorrow. "People will be helped to go to Antigua... and then given choices about their longer term decisions," she said. They would be given the choice of settling elsewhere in the Caribbean or in Britain.

Some residents who were forced to abandon their homes after eruptions last weekend have been sleeping in their cars.

Many of the estimated 4,000 people still living on Montserrat had said they could not afford to leave, and had nowhere to go.

Some protesters also spoke out against what they saw as government coercion to abandon the island.

"Those who can afford to will run, but what about those who can't?" asked Emmanuel White, a protester.

The demonstration followed the refusal of Bertrand Osborne, the Chief Minister, to disclose terms of the financial package being worked out for those who want to flee.

Officials announced on Saturday that they were preparing for the voluntary evacuation.

About 50 demonstrators, many of them unemployed and young, used empty petrol drums, rocks and a wooden church pew to block a road that links Salem — which has served as a commercial centre since Plymouth, the capital, was evacuated last year — to the south. They jeered police who cleared the junction and extinguished a small fire. There was no violence and no arrests.

Nearly two-thirds of Montserrat's 11,000 residents have left the island since the volcano erupted in July last year.

## Red tape puts pilots in stressful spin

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE United States Air Force, reeling from a spate of adultery cases and high-level resignations, faced accusations yesterday of creating an environment so stressful that pilots were resorting to drink and divorce.

A confidential report by the Rand Corporation, a private Washington think-tank used by the Pentagon to analyse military policy, quoted fighter and bomber commanders blaming senior officers for pushing them into pointless field exercises and needless inspections. Combined with overseas duties, that left pilots little time for training battle skills and led

to high stress levels, problem drinking, broken marriages and low morale.

Researchers surveyed hundreds of group, squadron and aircraft commanders at three USAF wings and emerged with a document in which respondents described the service as "broken" in the way its bureaucracy was planned.

"Relationships take the biggest hit," one officer said. "In our squadron we had the highest divorce rate in Air Combat Command at one time. It is terrible watching wives drink themselves to partial liver failure and be bitter at the husband, air force and life. It doesn't make for a great family life."

The report has arrived at a difficult time for the USAF. In May, Kelly Flinn,

America's first female B52 pilot, received a general discharge from the service after a highly publicised case of adultery. A month later General Joseph Ralston, Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was forced to withdraw his bid to be head of the armed services after revelations of an adulterous liaison.

General Ronald Fogleman, head of the air force, who has been presented with the findings, is to retire a year early next month over a disagreement with William Cohen, the Defence Secretary.

Robert Maginnis, a retired army officer, described the Rand report as a dire warning for the Pentagon. "It shows a lack of faith in senior leadership. The stress stuff is what is driving them out."

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1	2	3

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## Sure way to the heart is through the wallet

BY TOM RHODES

A MAN'S wallet is more attractive than his biceps and a woman's financial security ranks a close second to her good looks, according to a new survey.

Money has become the overriding consideration in relationships throughout the United States, according to findings from 21 of the country's biggest cities presented to the American Psychological Association.

For women, cash flow outranks a man's physical attractions, education or occupation, while men place only physical beauty above a woman's bank statement, rating a potential wife's income as far more important than her age, race or religion.

It has long been recognised that women prize the earning potential of a future mate, but the latest study by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles offers a new insight into the value men now place on a woman's economic status.

"We sense that there has been a recent change in this country which recognises that it takes two salaries to make a relationship work," said Belinda Tucker, a UCLA psychologist who conducted the survey. "Religion and background didn't seem to matter at all. Money was clearly now what mattered for men."

Financial strength in a prospective spouse was particularly valued by well-educated white men, blacks under 40, and white women raised by single mothers, the survey revealed.



# Crew brings crippled Mir back to life

By RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW AND NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

THE three-man crew on Russia's crippled space station Mir restarted their computer system yesterday, restoring control of the tumbling orbiter.

"The work of the computer system is completely restored," a mission control spokeswoman said, adding that the crew would now be able to restore Mir's stable alignment with the Sun.

"The gyroscopes are not yet working," she added, referring to the system that keeps the station optimally placed to accumulate solar energy. The ageing station has to be constantly aligned towards the Sun for its solar panels to produce energy. The spokeswoman said the cosmonauts had fired the engines of their Soyuz spaceship to help to reorientate Mir.

According to mission control, the two Russian cosmonauts and Michael Foale, the British-born NASA astronaut, successfully located and replaced the computer component that had malfunctioned on Monday, sending the craft spinning in orbit and forcing the space station to shut off all but its life-support systems.

The next big repair work, scheduled for later this week, will involve an estimated six

space walks to repair the damage caused in June when a supply ship crashed into Mir's Spektr module. The operation is intended to repair the damaged module and to reconnect vital power cables from Spektr, disconnected after the collision.

Nevertheless, there was little optimism at the Korolyov Space Centre yesterday that the process would go according to plan, after countless mishaps and fears that cost-cutting may cause further setbacks in the days to come.

Viktor Blagov, the deputy head of mission control, complained that, while the Russian space programme used to replace key components on Mir as a matter of routine, these days replacements were only made when parts broke down. The latest computer failure was located in a part that had not been replaced since the space station was launched 11 years ago.

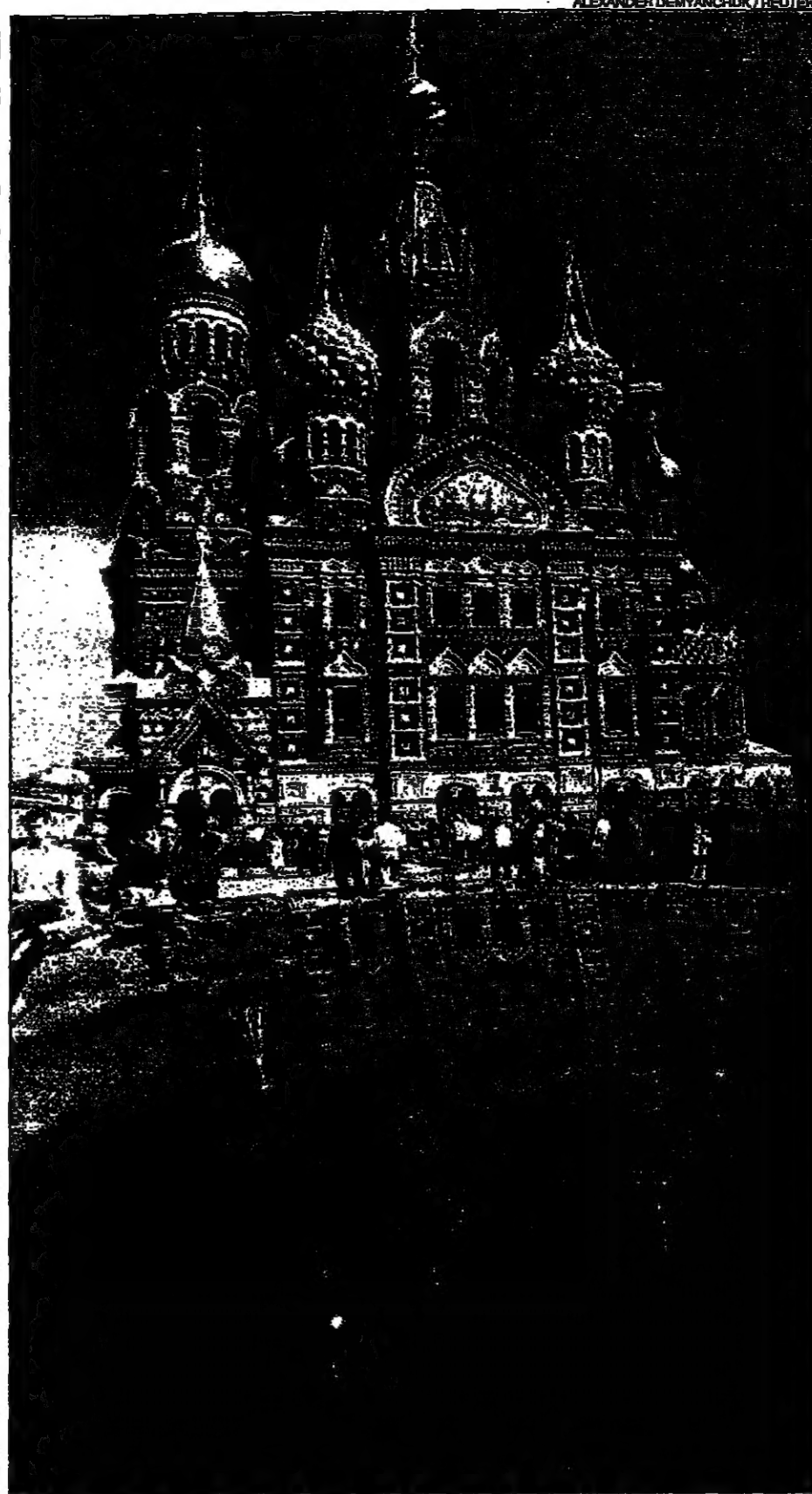
"We used to change Mir's computer parts after its technical life expectancy would run out, say after five years. But now due to financing we have to use them until they die," he added that Russia had to decide whether it wanted its priority in space to be "safety or saving money".

But such is the prestige invested by Russia in the world's only space station that bailing out is not yet an option. Ground controllers know that leaving Mir unmanned would make it even harder to recover later, though they have done it before. The Salyut 7 space station lost all power and drifted for months before being reoccupied.

For the Russians, Mir is one of the few surviving symbols of superpower status. As partners with America and Europe in the planned international space station, they need above all to retain credibility. They are world leaders in time spent in space, so to abandon Mir now would be a humiliating experience.

American behaviour is more difficult to understand. The US space agency NASA would never willingly expose its astronauts to similar dangers on its own spacecraft, yet during Mir's long-drawn-out decline it has acted as a dutiful echo to constant Russian assurances that all is well.

"They're not in any danger," was the latest advice from Kathleen Maliga, the spokeswoman for NASA at Russian mission control. "They're fine. This [computer failure] has happened before."



The Church of the Savior of Spilt Blood, one of St. Petersburg's greatest landmarks, yesterday admitted worshippers for the first time in 60 years (Richard Beeston writes). The church was built on the site of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II who, in spite of instituting reforms, was murdered by terrorists in

## St Petersburg church opens

1881. Restoration was completed on the church's exterior in 1992, but it took five more years to restore the extensive mosaic halls, stained-glass windows and marble floors which had

seriously deteriorated under Communism. The church's reopening is part of St. Petersburg's campaign to establish itself as Russia's cultural capital and chief tourist destination, but the ceremony was clouded by the assassination of Mayor of St. Petersburg, Kravchenko, in 1995.

## Bonn urged to pay East's Nazi victims

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

JEWISH lobbyists, enjoying broad support from the US Senate, yesterday began two days of negotiations with the German Government aimed at securing more German compensation for Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe.

On the eve of the talks, the American Jewish Committee took out full-page advertisements in the American press to print an open letter to Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor. The moral leverage of the Jewish negotiators — led by the Frankfurt-based Jewish Claims Conference — has rarely been more clearly stated.

The letter expressed: "Deep concern about the continued refusal of the German Government to pay pensions to the thousands of elderly Holocaust survivors living in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, even as generous war victims pensions are paid to veterans of the Waffen SS and other Nazi military organisations living in the same countries and elsewhere."

The appeal was signed by 82 senators, led by Senator Christopher Dodd. The cause has also been taken up in talks between President Clinton and Herr Kohl.

Some 13,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors and about 7,000 other persecuted people or former concentration camp inmates have yet to receive any substantial compensation because they lived in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union. The German Government has paid some DM100 billion (£34 billion) in compensation since 1949.

Payments were made to 12 countries, all in the West. A 1980 treaty set up a new hardship fund for Jewish survivors, again provided that they lived in the West.

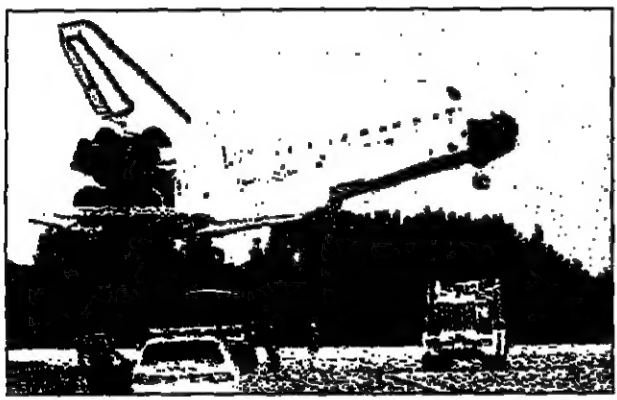
Only two large compensation funds have been set up for Eastern Europe: a DM300 million fund was allocated in 1991 for a German-Polish foundation, and a DM900 million foundation was set up with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. But these gestures did little for individual victims.

year-old Warsaw pensioner living in a one-room apartment is more fortunate than most. Many of the 500,000 former slave labourers and concentration camp survivors living in Poland have received DM500 (about £170) or less under the 1991 agreement. The compensation is paid according to the number of months of active persecution.

Miss Budnicka was a child in the Warsaw ghetto, was hidden in a hot, almost airless underground coal bunker for six months after the Nazis razed the ghetto in 1943, escaped through the sewers, was protected by Polish partisans and survived the end of the war in a convent. The runs baptised her as a Catholic. The compensation fund has calculated that she suffered for 65 months and has given her an above-average payment of

about £2,000. With the first instalment she bought a television and a washing machine but she feels that she and other Holocaust survivors should be given some more solid form of security. "All we want is a bit of justice," she says. Similar claims are now coming from throughout Eastern Europe. Pensions are paid to all Germans wounded in or bereaved by the war. However, legislation tried to avoid making a distinction between military units, wanting to keep criminal factions out of social welfare legislation. Now, as it emerges that as many as 3,000 SS men and their widows have had a comfortable living, the Government is embarrassed. But to change the law would involve a complete overhaul, since every German is constitutionally entitled to a pension.

## Shuttle crew returns home



The shuttle lands yesterday at the Kennedy Space Centre

Cape Canaveral: After a day's delay, the space shuttle Discovery and its crew of six returned to Earth yesterday with a satellite containing valuable information about Earth's ozone layer. It landed at Kennedy Space Centre just after sunrise, ending a 12-day mission that covered nearly 5 million miles.

The five US astronauts and one Canadian had worked with an environmental satellite, tested a robot arm for the future international space station and observed the comet Hale-Bopp. (Reuters)

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## Plavsic thwarted in bid to seize police station

FROM TOM WALKER IN BANJA LUKA

AN ATTEMPT by Biljana Plavsic, the Bosnian Serb president, to take control of Banja Luka's main police station failed yesterday, as her newly-appointed police commander was arrested by special forces loyal to Radovan Karadzic.

The balance of power in the town's confusing security apparatus became more precarious later in the day, with reports that Momcilo Krajcinovic, the Serb representative on the Bosnian state presidency, and Dragan Kijac, the sacked Interior Minister, were due to arrive, apparently to stage an anti-Plavsic rally.

In the midst of the confusion British troops abandoned their watch over the "public security centre," declaring their job done, a spokesman for Nato's Stabilisation Force (Sfor) said. "Our main concern is that there is no violence or confrontation. The appointment of police officers is an entirely local matter and not of Sfor's concern," Lieutenant Colonel Mike Wright said.

The battle for control of Banja Luka police station is a microcosm of the larger political tussle between Mrs Plavsic and Mr Karadzic, who since the war has controlled Republika Srpska's security forces, siphoning millions of pounds into Swiss bank accounts in the process through smuggling rackets. At last Mr Karadzic's empire seems to be crumbling, but senior policemen, many of them hand-

somely rewarded for their loyalty, are unsure whether to switch allegiance just yet.

"They're trying to estimate where the wind blows and who to join," said an insider at the station. "If Plavsic loses this game then she's lost the Krajina [Banja Luka] region forever, and then she's finished." The 16 opposition officers in Banja Luka made a radio appeal for the townspeople to stage a counter rally against Mr Krajcinovic. "Police forces are missing in Banja Luka from all other parts of Republika Srpska," they said.

To all outward appearances it was a normal day at the police station, with officers coming and going in good humour. The street in front was still blocked off, however, and outside Mrs Plavsic's presidency building her most trusted police intelligence officer, Major Dragan Lukac,

was anxiously briefing teams of security guards. It was Major Lukac who forced pro-Karadzic officers out of the police station on Sunday, and his special forces have become the front line of defence for Mrs Plavsic. Ironically, Major Lukac is a former bodyguard to Mr Karadzic.

He said Milan Sutlovic, the officer appointed by Mrs Plavsic to take control of the police station, had been arrested by Karadzic loyalists led by Dejan Samara, the station's previous commander. Mr Sutlovic was asked to sign a paper giving his resignation: he refused, and was said to be resting at home.

"We don't know what's happening," a duty officer said late yesterday. "Sutlovic went out and he never came back. Samara is in charge."

In a town now alive with conspiracy theories, mystery, also surrounded Jovo Rosic, a constitutional court judge allegedly beaten up by Karadzic forces before last week's crucial veto of Mrs Plavsic's dissolution of parliament. Condemned by Washington and European capitals, the incident helped to bolster Mrs Plavsic's image as the anti-corruption champion to save the Dayton peace accord.

Mr Rosic allegedly received treatment in Banja Luka's Paprikovac hospital, since Friday, however, he has failed to appear in public. The hospital has no record of his stay, and no witnesses to the beating have been found.



Plavsic special forces arrested her commander

## Nine more killed in the Alps

FROM SUSAN BELL IN PARIS

THE death toll in the Alps rose again yesterday, as the treacherous slopes claimed nine more lives, bringing the number of people killed this summer to over a hundred.

In the Swiss Alps, four climbers died in an ice avalanche at about 13,780 feet. Also in the southern canton of Valais, three workers were killed by a rockslide as they cleared a footpath at 9,200 feet.

Two French climbers, Thierry Renard, 65, and Georges Ripert, 54, fell 1,000 feet to their deaths after one of the men lost his balance in a snowy gully.

The previous day, a German tourist was killed during his descent from the Aiguille Verte, near Mont Blanc. Mountain holidays in summer now claim more lives than winter sports, with at least 40 climbers killed in France more than 30 in Italy and at least 32 in Switzerland this summer.

The number of dead, while not higher than in previous years, show a rise in multiple accidents, with whole parties roped together falling to their deaths. But it is not just high-altitude climbers who are at risk. Mountain rescuers say tourists and day hikers often are unprepared for the conditions, are easily in danger.

About 60 people a day report to the emergency room of Champoniz hospital, with broken limbs, twisted ankles or worse.

## Bankrupt winemaker is found shot dead

Wiesbaden: Count Erwein Matschka Greiffendau, the German winemaker, was found dead from a gunshot wound yesterday, the day after his family-run business declared bankruptcy. Police said he apparently shot himself in the head with his 9mm handgun.

The body of Count Matschka, 59, was found on a bench close to his Schloss

Vollrads property in Rheingau, the Rhine valley wine-growing region west of Frankfurt. Police found a farewell letter and a will at his home.

The Matschka vineyards have been in the family for 27 generations. Over the past three years, however, the business fell an estimated DM20 million (£6.8 million) into debt. (AP)

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# Bohemian rhapsody in Portobello



LEFT: Chevron-stripe knit top, £34.99, and pin-stripe skirt, £39.99. CENTRE: Velvet glamour dress, £39.99, and cheetah print mules, £34.99. RIGHT: Harvard check tweed coat, £89.99, Nostalgia Jacquard skirt, £34.99, and white V-neck jumper, £31.99. Available at Oasis branches nationwide, telephone 01865 881968. PHOTOGRAPHER: Manuela Pavesi; Stylist: Claudia Navone; Model: Chrystalle Cervelle; Hair: Aline Pichot; Make-up: Jackie Hamilton-Smith using Max Factor's autumn/winter '97 colours.

## What will be in vogue next season?

## See what's in Vogue this September



See it in Vogue, before it's in vogue.

Oasis has taken the ethos of Portobello Road and woven it into two desirable collections, says Grace Bradberry

It can be only a matter of time before someone bottles the Portobello Road and sells it over the counter at Harvey Nichols. Forget Bond Street, all serious fashion aspirations now tend towards this short stretch of W11.

The eclectic look was born here, as Trustafarians with time on their hands scoured the second-hand stalls and antique shops for lace camisoles, leather coats and old velvet skirts. Unfettered by office dress codes, they wore all these items together, creating a look that is filtering down to the rest of us.

In many ways it is a liberation, an opportunity to wear all the fabrics that at some point or other were deemed to be in bad taste — latex, leather, fake fur, animal-print chiffon. And can you remember any other time in recent memory when it was considered OK to wear velvet during the day?

Nevertheless, the heart does not exactly soar at the prospect of elbowing aside the likes of Kate Moss and Gwyneth Paltrow to bag that elusive slip dress. And oh, the dry-cleaning bills as the item is rendered fit for human habitation.

What a joy then, to discover that an affordable label has reproduced the Portobello look — sized, coordinated and sold amid airy minimalism. Oasis, with its 110 stores, has always tried to stay a little to one side of the main high street track. It has created collections with an identifiable feel or mood, that gesture towards a desirable lifestyle. The last year has seen the clothes become a little more disparate, as fashion goes in a dozen different directions at once.

This autumn, however, Oasis is right back on track, with two complementary collections that are what the fashion industry would describe as "directional". They are also ruthlessly edited in the way that collections in more upmarket shops, such as Whistles, say, or Joseph, would be. The Nostalgia line uses velvet, lace, embroidery and beading, all associated with antique evening wear, but uses them for daytime clothes. The Harvard collection includes more masculine fabrics, such as pin-stripes and tweeds. The two groups are designed to be mixed together.

Lynne Burshall, design director at Oasis, says: "We felt the season was going to be more ornate and decorative. We also wanted to get texture in there, with tweeds and checks. Overall, we're doing quite a lot of fabric mixing, putting feminine Jacquard skirts under tweed coats."

Despite its individualistic feel, the collection includes quite a few basic colours, including plenty of black and red. "Our customers will want the clothes to work into their existing wardrobes, though they also want things that look a bit different. We're always trying to get that balance."

Let us miss the point of these carefully structured collections, the clothes have been shot in the Portobello area by Manuela Pavesi, a former fashion editor of Italian Vogue and one of Europe's top photographers. With this star treatment, the clothes come into their own. They boast a languid style that belies the modest price tags. The mix of textures and patterns is subtle, not loud.

Creating a successful high street collection is about picking up on trends fast, and swiftly sorting the possible from the impossible. Leather has great high street potential this year because even in the designer collections it has a retro, almost synthetic, quality that can be emulated at lower price brackets.

When one sees "trash" PVC skirts being paraded on the catwalk, one's mind immediately boggles at the price tag for something that ought to be available for less than £50. The main thing is getting the cut right, and this is the sort of thing a mass-market label can do to perfection.

The latest Oasis collection clearly has taken both these concepts on board.

The latex fabrics are also used to good effect. The little velvet dress shown here has that rather boxy cut at the neck, with a slight drape down into the bust, that designers — including Gucci and Donna Karan — have gone for. But it is casual enough not to appear self-consciously aspiring.

At the other end of the scale, corduroy — a resolutely casual fabric, and a favourite among the Portobello princesses — is used for a relatively formal knee-length coat. For later in the year, there is also an aubergine-coloured fake fur coat and a black coat with a fur collar, both of which capture this autumn's vampish mood. Spike heels, worn with more feminine skirts, offer a halfway house between bohemianism and the Eighties power dressing that is gradually creeping back.

Such footwear is, of course, utterly impractical. Portobello looks set to be full of women trying to wrench their shoes clear of the cracks in the pavement. Best not to attempt the whole Portobello princess lifestyle. Buy the clothes in an hour flat in a nice, airy shop, and save the heels for coming out as a vamp at night.

We can now wear all the fabrics that were once deemed in bad taste

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# Mother's little liquid helper

It's not boredom that makes them reach for a nice cold alcopop, says Maureen Freely

The husband leaves in the morning and the wife is glad to hear the door close behind him. She is free, the children go to school, she is alone, she attends to a thousand small tasks, her hands are busy, but her mind is empty, what plans she has for the family, she lives only for them, it relieves her, even when they return, a little present, but how foolish this would seem now. The evening is dull, reading, radio, desultory talks, each remains alone under cover of this intimacy. The wife wonders, with hope or apprehension, whether tonight — at last — something will happen. She goes to sleep disappointed, and it is with pleasure that she will hear him slam the door next morning.

This is how Simone de Beauvoir described the housewife's lot in 1949. It is a triumph of negative advertising: read it and you easily forget that the job came with perks, too. A stay-at-home wife had some status in those days. She did not live in isolation. She had plenty of adult company — half the human race, in fact. She might have resented her exclusion from public life but at least she could turn on that radio and hear pompous politicians ask each other: "How will this important new decision affect the Housewife?" No-one bothers to take the part of the Housewife now. With the possible exception of Richard and Judy, no-one outside the world of market research seems aware they even exist. Little wonder, then, that they've sunk to drinking alcopops.

This news comes to us care of John Phillips, managing director of the Split Drinks Company. Earlier this month he told a government inquiry that its alcopop, Jammin', was most popular with "bored housewives" who like to have a drink during the day, but who had qualms about spending of alcohol. "With Jammin'," he said, "they can enjoy a drink on the quiet without their husbands knowing." Ministers at the inquiry are said to have been beguiled by his cavalier comments. One, *the Independent* says, is a *senior* while Rod Alexander of the *Cherry Turning* Point expressed concern that drink companies might be pushing bored housewives into alcoholism.

It's more likely that the alcopop bars were using bored housewives as a smokescreen. Independent research unveiled at a national seminar on alcopops this week confirmed that they continue to be popular with the under-aged and that they are packaged to appeal not to housewives but to ravers — a wise strategy, in view of other research showing that single women in the 16-24 and 35-44 brackets drink more than married women of any age. This is not to say that drink is never a problem with housewives. Certainly 24-year-old Amanda Ryan-McCurdy wouldn't say it: she has to appear in court this week after police found her driving 13 children in her Ford Escort while more than twice over the drink-drive limit.

The alcohol in her bloodstream, it seems, was from a party the night before. Most of the children belonged to neighbours who for one reason or another had not managed to collect them from a football match. It all sounds very odd and worrying — especially as the children in question were between six months and four years in age. Clearly there is a problem here — but is it fair to call it boredom? It's not a word housewives themselves use when bemoaning their lot. The ones I know complain instead about being run off their feet, stepped on and taken for granted.

When they have very young children to justify their "unemployed" status, they can at least draw from a large pool of sympathetic listeners. But by the time their children reach school age, most of their confidantes will have drifted back to work. From then on they will be "just dashing out the door" when their stay-at-home friends ring them in the morning, "unable to speak for long" when they ring them at the office, and too tired to speak at all in the evening. If housewives with school-age children are to have any adult contact at all during normal working hours, they must befriend women with whom they have nothing in common. Nothing, that is, except for the complex web of jumble sales, village fairs, playgroups, school runs, ballet lessons, doctors' visits, and urgent errands that make their lives so fraught. In the old days, things were more

It's how I reward myself when I've done my day's work



Solitary drinking can be dangerous, but housewives are not children, and an alcopop does not equal perdition

relaxed because half the human race did this sort of unpaid work. Now that the domestic sphere has been downsized, the burden every individual housewife has to carry is much, much heavier. They are forever finding themselves in situations where they just can't say no.

The worst part, they say, is that people think they're doing you a favour by keeping you busy. "It will get you out of the house," head teachers say when they lumber you with the promises auction. "It will be a nice change of scene," husbands and in-laws say, when they need a lift to an airport on the other side of the country. Then, when you get them there, they ask: "When are you going back to do some

proper work?" I doubt anyone would have dared say that to one of Simone's housewives.

The worst offenders in this regard, my friends tell me, are housewife-turned-workaholics like me. We understand, you see, but oh so condescendingly. So every time they admit to us some common-or-garden adult discontent — a snippy husband, a wayward teenager — we tell them how much less "dependent" and "enmeshed" they will be if they find some way to "use" their minds.

It's this sort of friendly advice that sends so many housewives scrambling for alibis. They start talking frantically about the courses they might take, the interior

decorating businesses they'll be setting up after they've run nine marathons. Hobbies that used to be pleasures now become badges.

"I don't work, but I sometimes repair harpsichords," they say. Or, "I was reading such a fascinating philosopher yesterday after I did six hours in my vegetable garden." Why isn't it enough to say that they are proud to have created households that are all of a piece, and that plenty of people benefit from their being on call 24 hours a day?

If women's work in the home has no status, and seems to the outside world to have no purpose, it's partly — a practitioner at the Women's Therapy Link tells me

— because it has no name. "It's not called management, and it's not an art or a craft" — and especially in the middle classes, it's often assumed to be expendable. Perhaps this explains why so many housewives I know suffer from depression, and why, as they grow older, they become so worried about "being replaced". All too often, their fears come true.

That's my theory, anyway, about that po-faced Chanel mother a friend spotted knocking back glasses of whisky at the pub next to her children's school. Not to mention the agitated blonde with a Spacewagon full of children who beat me to that phone booth at my health club to spend 40 minutes telling some man no one had made her feel "this way" since she'd married "that bastard".

My health club attracts housewives of all ages. Some of the older ones also heard snatches of the conversation, and in the changing room later they did a lot of communal eyebrow raising. They thought the woman was a disgrace to the calling because they do see a purpose in their lives. As do all their families: they are forever racing off to distant continents to meet their children's childcare emergencies. They do so many favours for everyone else, myself included, that they should register as charities.

August is a particularly difficult month, because of all those family visits. "They won't have a simple meal," I heard one woman complain. "My son says, 'what shall we eat?' I say, 'what about boiled fish?' He and his wife cry, 'oh no Mum, we must have pesto this and pesto that and walnut oil for the salad.' And off we go to Sainsbury's to buy all those little jars..."

Another woman had just shocked her vegetarian daughter-in-law by serving a jelly ("How was I to know there was bone marrow in gelatine?"). A third confessed she had come for a swim to get away from her retired husband (they all sigh when anyone mentions a retired husband) who had gone haywire with their new Dyson. "It's not just that he was vacuuming all night," she wailed. "It's his only topic of conversation. How many dog hairs it had picked up in the last hour. What I'd missed last time in the far corner. How filthy the house must have been before he came to the rescue. I was tempted to remind him how long I'd been asking for a new vacuum cleaner, but I didn't like to say." They never do, which may explain why some might decide to treat themselves to Prozac, Valium, or a nice, cold alcopop.

It's how I reward myself when everything's organised and I've done my day's work," one housewife friend tells me. Her poison is Hooch, and she always has "one or two" lurking at the back of the refrigerator. "And what's wrong with that?" Granted, it is dangerous to get into the habit of secret, solitary drinking. But housewives are not children, and an alcopop does not equal perdition. It seems unfair to expect them to proclaim the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about their every little drinkie while remaining otherwise discreet and self-effacing. Unfair and unwise. Just imagine how we'd all suffer if they stopped "taking the edge off things" — and felt compelled by their new sharp focus to say what they thought.

Language lesson + Women's business + Adding to the shame + Stars split

## The linguistic sex bullies

THE late Kingsley Amis was always scathing about Welsh people's insistence on having words spelt out in their own language. I remember him, at a *Spectator* lunch, expatiating wonderfully — with characteristic eloquence — on the idiocy of the signs for "Taxis" underneath, and presumably to clarify, the signs for "Taxi" when, as he pointed out, there was hardly any room for confusion as it was.

He chose to miss the point, to refuse to see the argument as political rather than linguistic, or indeed to acknowledge that the two are inevitably intertwined. He shared something here with the Post-Modernists, to whom he most apocryphally did not belong, in his apparent acceptance of the transparency of language. Words are imbued with a meaning other than the one they obviously signify, they are not just ciphers. We know what the Welsh mean by spelling taxi taxi. If we are being honest, we also know what the Equal Opportunities Commission is about in trying to get rid of gender distinctions in what is a gender-distinguishing language, but I wish we could hear the elder Amis's opinions on it. Too late for that, of course, and I acknowledge we know, too, what they'd be.

In theory, there is much to

split about. The idea of the EOC telling the Welsh to mend their sexist ways and change their non-endings accordingly is, on initial reading, astonishing. This is not because I pooh-pooh the idea of language being sexist: it is sexist. Ours isn't particularly — we have merely the problem of universal and supposedly neutral application of the

Language (Pandora Press, £7.99) forthwith. But the difficulty is, even while acknowledging that language is sexist, there are historical reasons for its being so. Can an edict overturn history? It certainly cannot rewrite it, and shouldn't try.

Religion is a moot point, too: the Pope is being implored to "upgrade" the Vir-

Nigella Lawson



male pronoun to bother our pretty little heads about — but even at age 12 I remember the justified irritation about being told by my French teacher that "the male always takes precedence".

And don't let anyone tell you that such things do — and I advise you to buy a copy of Dale Spender's *Man Made*

gin, Mary, so that instead of the Holy Trinity, Catholics can pray to the Holy Quartet. Somehow, I can't think the Pope will oblige. Again, this is not because the accusation of sexism is unfounded in the Roman Catholic Church, but because it is its very foundation.

But linguistically, the Welsh have more of a prob-

lem than most. It's not just that, like the Germans, they have different words for a man and a woman doing the same thing (*Lehrer* and *athro* being the German and Welsh, respectively, for a male teacher, *Lehrerin* or *athrawes* for a female one), which the modern sensibility cannot tolerate, but that, in some cases, only a male form exists. There are no female forms for doctor or solicitor, for example. And so the EOC has asked Welsh academics to see how newer forms might be evolved.

I believe in the organic development of language; you cannot bully anyone into "correct usage", since correct usage is, by definition, how language is being used. But here some gentle nudging might be in order. I welcome in our own language the use of the singular "they", purely on the ground that it is better than "him or her" — and for all my linguistic tolerance, I shrink from the use of him to include her.

But before anyone gets too worked up about "politically correct usage", they should remember two things: none of this is to be enforced — we are talking, politely, guidelines here; and there is only one test, the everyday use of language itself. Such matters are unarguably democratic: let the people speak.

## A graceless Kelly

IT makes no sense for Kelly Fisher to accuse Dodi Fayed of humiliating her. Until she made her stand, only her friends were privy to her humiliation — now the whole world is. Have some people no shame? And apart from money, what can she hope to gain from all this? If she thinks she will win our sympathy, she is severely misguided. All is not fair in love, and the more she tells us how ill she was used, the less we all think of her.

There is some shame in being dumped, there is almost a smell about it. To draw attention to it is to add to the stench. Mí Fayed's ex-wife says Ms Fisher told her she had dumped him: how much better she would be feeling now if she'd stuck to that story.

Thomas Mann wrote in the book that was my teenage passion, *Tonio Kröger*: "He who loves the most is the inferior and must suffer."

I know this is an adolescent insight, but that's how we all feel. Ms Fisher arouses our contempt not, fairly, because she's milking this situation for all its financial worth, but unfairly, because in protesting her love, she's convincing us of her inferiority.

## Another fateful seven

SHOWBIZ gossip is not my field, nor it is even my interest. Nevertheless — and for what it's worth — it has come to me why Brad Pitt and Gwyneth Paltrow have ended their engagement. The film *Seven Years in Tibet*, starring Pitt, has been recalled by the Hollywood studio that made it after *Stern* magazine claimed the central character (Pitt) had been a Nazi stormtrooper. Ms Paltrow, for all her pale Quaker looks, is Jewish; the wedding was to take place in a synagogue. The facts speak for themselves, no?

men are making, you could be forgiven for thinking it is not only women who bleed.

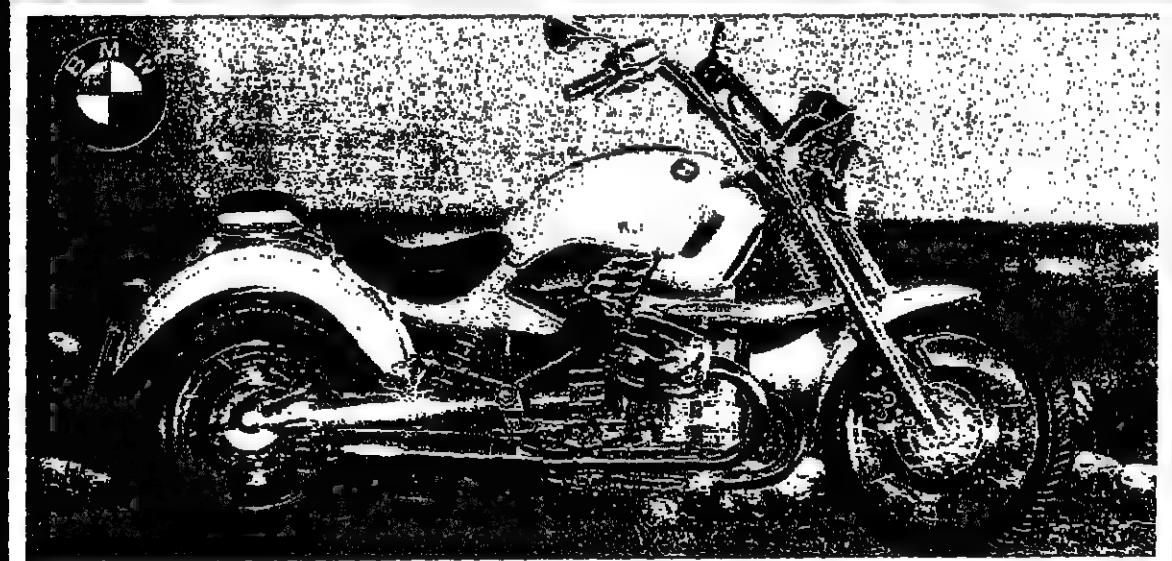
DO not think, though, that I am — as current terminology has it — particularly gender-sensitive as the current terminology has it. Most of the time I am irritated rather than persuaded by accusations of sexism. We seem to believe these days that to make any distinction is wrong, and must be based on deficient ideologies.

Not so, of course — and forgive my indecency if I illustrate the point by drawing your attention to the heated argument over a "menstrual cap" called. Instead of the advertising thereof, The company that owns the product seems to be taking its name seriously: it has disqualified men from producing the campaign to alert us to it. The advertising men bleat "sexism", and say how unjustified and unfair such a ruling is.

Everyone now declares the end of politics, but surely we are witnessing the reverse: that is to say, the politicisation of everything. This decision is about commerce and selling and it does, I'm afraid, make sense. Men are not going to be using or buying this product, and one can forgive the company that makes it for believing that their approach might thus be irrelevant. But for all the fuss that the

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THE TIMES



# Mandarin of the mandarins

Sue Cameron on the task ahead for the new Cabinet Secretary

Of all the decisions which Tony Blair took in his first 100 days, few will have more significance for at least the next 1,000 than his selection of Sir Richard Wilson to take over as Britain's most powerful civil servant.

Sir Richard will inherit a Whitehall torn between triumphalism and deep unease. Elation springs from the hope that Tony Blair's presidential style could mark the start of a golden age for the Civil Service.

Central control and closed-door committees, plus a lack of dogmatism on policy issues, offers senior officials the chance to enjoy greater influence than they have had for decades. Yet new Labour's approach to politics could lead as easily to traditional civil servants being marginalised, their role usurped by outsiders more congenial to ministers.

Sir Richard, who will succeed Sir Robin Butler in the twin posts of Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service, stands to become the guide and confidant of a young Prime Minister lacking in any ideological underpinning. If he can deliver on the policy front, Whitehall's prestige and importance will be greatly enhanced. More problematic for the Civil Service is Mr Blair's style of government — the shifting of the political debate away from the public arena to the conference rooms of Whitehall.

Madam Speaker has already started voicing publicly her concern at the way the Government has been pre-empting major announcements to the media before telling the Commons — so maximising the influence of spin-doctors and minimising that of MPs. Meanwhile, ministers have been ordered formally to clear every speech and every media lunch with No 10.

And the invitation to the Liberal Democrats to sit on a Cabinet committee discussing constitutional issues will effectively gag them. They will be required to observe confidentiality on all business discussed in the committee. Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown will be unable even to tell his backbenchers when he agrees or — more important — disagrees with Mr Blair.

At first sight all this may seem to be tailor-made for Whitehall. If the politicians encounter problems in hammering out consensus deals behind closed doors, help will be at hand from Sir Richard with the massed ranks of the senior Civil Service shimmering at his back.

"The civil servants will love it," says Professor Peter Hennessy, doyen of Whitehall watchers. "For years most of them have been going to Brussels regularly and they've honed their brokering skills over there. Now they'll be able to use them here."

There is a potential downside in all this for Whitehall.

The Scott report revealed the ineptitude and self-interest of Whitehall's culture of confidentiality. In the eyes of the public, the Civil Service is still on probation. A repeat performance will not be tolerated.

Yet in the run-up to the next election, Mr Ashdown may have every incentive to walk out of the committee amid a hail of acrimonious revelation about the deals done. After all, there is little point in voting for the Liberal Democrats if they have become a mere cadet branch of the Labour Party.

Mr Blair's consensus politics will pose a further dilemma for Whitehall. As one former Permanent Secretary remarked: "Show me a piece of legislation based on consensus and I reach for my gun."

Not all the Commons criticism of government policy is of the synthetic, stage-act kind that has so sickened the public. Without the bombardment of parliamentary scrutiny, there is a good chance that consensus legislation will be bad legislation leading to the kind of major policy failures that undermine the standing of politicians in the eyes of the public and of civil servants in the eyes of their ministers.

There have been enough examples in the past from the Child Support Agency to the poll tax. Mr Blair's manner of government poses another, even more serious risk, for Whitehall. Traditional, impartial, civil servants could find themselves being re-

placed by outsiders committed to Labour. There is concern that this is happening already.

Jill Rutter, the Treasury's director of information, has just resigned after three months of being systematically bypassed by the Chancellor and his Labour press secretary, Charlie Whelan. She was left sitting isolated in the august Treasury building, while Mr Whelan sat in the Red Lion over the road spinning the latest line to journalists.

Two other directors of information have also been sent on gardening leave, a Civil Service euphemism for suspension. Their departure may be coincidence or the result of clumsy handling. Or it may be the start of a purge that goes far beyond press officers. What is certain is that the fate of the Whitehall Three will send a frisson around the Civil Service.

Sir Richard will play a crucial role in deciding the fate of his own Whitehall troops and of the Blair Government itself. Before he takes over in the new year, he will have the chance to influence a number of key Whitehall appointments.

Some half a dozen Permanent Secretary posts — the top Civil Service jobs in each department — are becoming vacant. This will give Sir Richard the chance to strengthen links to new Labour ministers and to put his own stamp on Whitehall. We might then start to see who is going to mould whom.

**Sir Richard stands to become Blair's confidant**



## Shades of the Old Vic

Theatres are not just bricks and mortar, they are home to the spirits of the past

Every time a theatre closes, a little something in us dies. Other arts are closet passions. In a theatre the community cries and laughs collectively. It argues, hopes and is afraid. Shut a concert hall and you amputate a cultural limb. Close a theatre and you lobotomise the soul.

Or so theatre people would have us believe. Once again in its 180-year history, London's most famous theatre, the Old Vic, is "under threat". Its benefactors of the past 15 years, the Mervishes of Toronto, are putting the place up for sale in December. The new company formed by Sir Peter Hall will have strutted just one brief season on its stage. Pending a buyer — and theatre millionaires this week denied all interest — the old lady of Waterloo will again wear widow's weeds.

Does it matter? The Vic was always a commercial monster. It was built after the opening of Waterloo Bridge in 1818 to bring glamour to the South Bank marshes. Streets such as The Cut and Lower Marsh reflected its grim environs. The first owner was the stagecoach son of a rich merchant, Joseph Glossop. He had to supply flares and foot patrols to defend visitors from the size of dogs and from bands of pickpockets and garroters. When Hazlitt came to a performance, he declared the audience mostly "prostitutes and mountebanks".

The Vic's most famous era was in the first half of this century under Lilian Baylis. She had a talent for staging popular classics while also balancing the books. "Lord God send me a good actor, but send him cheap," was her motto. She never watched the plays, but by launching the careers of the greatest names in 20th-century drama, Baylis invested the Old Vic with an aura of invincibility that has lasted ever since. Who could bring down a curtain on a stage that had echoed to Laughton, Neville, Burton, Richardson, Olivier, Redgrave, Evans, Gielgud?

Acting is the only profession that requires its practitioners to believe in ghosts. I was a member of the Old Vic in the pre-Mervish years and lost count of the producers who would plead for an overspend by citing the shades of the past. All seemed to believe, with Baylis, that an Old Vic director was directly inspired by Almighty God. Although God was mysteriously bereft of an Arts Council grant. His begging bowl was supposedly, unrefusable. Baylis

eventually ruined the Old Vic when divine revelation told her that "My People must have the best and God tells me that the best in theatre is grand opera."

After the war, Olivier's National Theatre brought the Vic subsidised salvation, until he left for his new Thames-side palace in 1976. From then until the arrival of the Mervishes, the Vic stumbled from crisis to crisis.

When other West End theatres were under threat of mass closure in the Sixties, the response was extraordinary — and not just from theatre

acolytes. Theatres are shrines, holy ground encumbered with saints and martyrs. This antiquarianism seems at odds with the vitality of "live" theatre. The glory of drama is that it can be staged anywhere. This week in Edinburgh companies are performing in church halls, pubs, garages, private flats, even the street. Some audiences may need Shakespeare's Wooden O to "hold the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt". The plays themselves need no such prop. Shakespeare's plays-within-plays were content with the Elsinore banquet hall, the Forest of Arden or Quince's "this green plot our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring house". They needed no National Lottery grant.

Most actors and directors curse the buildings in which they perform, new as well as old. Backstage conditions at the modern Barbican and National Theatres are hideous. Seating at most fringe theatres is backbreaking. Old auditoriums contrive to suppress all but shouted lines, while amplifying the slightest audience cough.

Visiting a West End theatre can be a miserable experience, forcing writing and acting to work ever harder. Perhaps the quality of the London stage is due to this need to triumph over physical adversity.

Yet I admit the central argument. Buildings do relate to the activities to which they shelter. Parliamentary argument is influenced by the shape of the debating chamber. Religious ritual interacts with church architecture. A palace occupied by a monarch has an aura that is absent from a museum. I cannot visit the Albert Hall, or Canterbury Cathedral, or the House of Commons, or even the Savoy Hotel, and treat these buildings as mere inhabited archaeology. We fight to save old buildings not just because we like looking at them. We fight because they do hold ancestral spirits. Yesterday's cast adds lustre to today's.

Of no building is this more true than a theatre. Show a film and the

audience retreats. Begin the performance of a play and the audience advances. It enters into conversation with the stage. If architecture impedes this conversation, the play does not work. The past is embedded in that architecture, is part of its electric current. The new Savoy Theatre, rebuilt after gutting by fire, still sings of D'Oyly Carte. Nobody can visit the Old Vic and forget the actors that have peopled its stage.

The London theatre does more than honour these ancestors. Like the pre-Reformation Church, it offers salvation and indulgence to its present benefactors. The reason why so few theatres close is that rich people feel somehow uplifted by association with the stage. The Old Vic was founded by a stagestruck impresario. Stagestruck ministers and officials have sustained it since, as have the stagestruck Mervishes. A magic ingredient keeps theatres going long after their founding fathers have moved on. By hook, by crook, by subsidy, even by social security, they survive. As the Old Vic closes, the impresario, Sally Green, plans to rebuild Collins Music Hall on Islington Green. London theatres grow in number, there are now more than 100. The Mervishes were just the latest, and most generous, of angels. They reportedly buried almost £30 million at the Vic.

Simon Jenkins

they are expected to perform as well as old. Backstage conditions at the modern Barbican and National Theatres are hideous. Seating at most fringe theatres is backbreaking. Old auditoriums contrive to suppress all but shouted lines, while amplifying the slightest audience cough.

Visiting a West End theatre can be a miserable experience, forcing writing and acting to work ever harder. Perhaps the quality of the London stage is due to this need to triumph over physical adversity.

Yet I admit the central argument. Buildings do relate to the activities to which they shelter. Parliamentary argument is influenced by the shape of the debating chamber. Religious ritual interacts with church architecture. A palace occupied by a monarch has an aura that is absent from a museum. I cannot visit the Albert Hall, or Canterbury Cathedral, or the House of Commons, or even the Savoy Hotel, and treat these buildings as mere inhabited archaeology. We fight to save old buildings not just because we like looking at them. We fight because they do hold ancestral spirits. Yesterday's cast adds lustre to today's.

Of no building is this more true than a theatre. Show a film and the

audience retreats. Begin the performance of a play and the audience advances. It enters into conversation with the stage. If architecture impedes this conversation, the play does not work. The past is embedded in that architecture, is part of its electric current. The new Savoy Theatre, rebuilt after gutting by fire, still sings of D'Oyly Carte. Nobody can visit the Old Vic and forget the actors that have peopled its stage.

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## Paisley is Scotland's tragedy

Magnus Linklater says scandal mars devolution debate

It should by rights have been a triumphant demonstration of cross-party unity: three political leaders brought together for the first time by a common policy on the future government of Scotland. In Edinburgh yesterday the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, was flanked not only by the Liberal Democrat Menzies Campbell, but by the leader of the Scottish Nationalists, Alex Salmond — a man once reviled by Labour as the dangerous outlaw of Scottish politics.

But things did not go according to plan. Instead of keen debate on the prospects for next month's referendum, the questions from the floor nagged away persistently at events in Paisley. The imminent suspension of a Labour MP accused of smearing his now dead colleague, Gordon McMaster, has brought this seamy and unpleasant affair out of Labour's backyard and damped it at the front pavement at exactly the wrong moment.

It has, of course, nothing to do with the referendum itself, as Mr Dewar was at pains to point out. But at the very least it is a dangerous distraction. If the polls are anything to go by, the vote is by no means yet sewn up, and opponents of devolution have seized on the allegations to undermine the Government's campaign for a double "yes" vote — yes to a Scottish parliament, yes to taxation powers.

The line being pushed yesterday by the Think Twice campaign, which is pressing for a double "no", could hardly have been cruder: "The Scottish people know that the boys and the girls don't like the look of the boys on offer," said the press release. More insidiously, the question being asked at the weekend was whether Labour's Scottish headquarters had deliberately suppressed the results of a previous inquiry into alleged corruption in Paisley. There have been stories of letters, possibly forged, bearing the signatures of Labour's former Chief Whip and his deputy, which effectively killed off a damning report into the activities of the MP under suspicion, Tommy Graham.

None of this in fact amounts to a row of beads as far as the referendum is concerned. The whole point of the proportional representation system which will elect a future Scottish parliament is to put ahead to the one-party domination that led to the Paisley mess in the first place. Labour's agreement to support the Liberal Democrats' on PR was a handsome concession by a party which might otherwise have expected to control the government of Scotland in the same way that it has traditionally held power throughout the Central Belt. The additional member system means that it will have to seek support from at least one other party to command a majority. At the same time, new Labour is determined to see an end to the old Labour style of politics in the West of Scotland, which Tommy Graham represents.

So Paisley is an aberration, a throwback to a dinosaur brand of politics soon to be extinct. But some of the mud is sticking, in part because the rumours are so hard to pin down. What, after all, is the charge? Corruption, vote-rigging, malicious rumour, or just the continuing existence of a petty fiefdom riven by hatred and suspicion? I know of at least four local inquiries into false membership lists in and around Paisley that came to nothing.

The Scottish Office has looked into allegations that public money was siphoned off by drug dealers. The Labour Party has tried to pin down charges of corruption. Now the present Chief Whip has conducted his own inquiry into the McMaster smear. All have found that the evidence is mostly word-of-mouth, the accusations uncorroborated, the witnesses often dumb. And the real enmity between the various factions makes it hard to decide when old scores are being paid off or when genuine information is being produced.

Clearly it is something that Labour has to resolve, and quickly, if the referendum is to have anything like a clear run. But given the inchoate nature of the affair and the long list of Mr Graham's friends ready and willing to defend their patron, a speedy resolution seems hard to achieve. That, in the end, is a disservice for "yes" and "no" voters alike who may be deprived of the chance to engage in the real arguments about this referendum. It would be tragic if this, the culmination of a century-long debate about the future of the Union and Scotland's place in it, was polluted by a seamy dispute about local party politics.

Help, however, may be at hand — and from an unexpected quarter. The best contribution yesterday came from Mr Salmond, whose party is pledged to eventual independence but who has thrown his weight behind the "yes" campaign. He is the most effective public debater in Scotland, and his party can deliver a formidable vote-getting machine when it wants to. It would be ironic if Labour's old foe became its most effective ally in the battle for a Scottish parliament.

Alan Coren is away.

## Mad idea

JUST when it seemed that there were no more Tory clothes left for new Labour to steal, there comes bewildering news from right-wing think-tank the Adam Smith Institute. Madmen Pirie, the institute's president, is volunteering to be Tony Blair's new chief policy wonk.

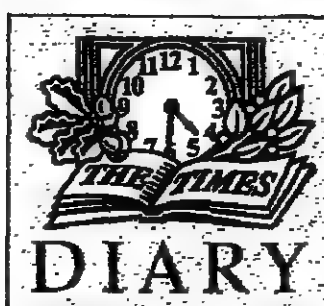
Pirie, who disclosed his love affair with Labour in *The Times*, now says he is throwing his hat

into the ring for the job of head of the Downing Street policy unit. The post has remained unfilled since Labour came to power and the hunt for a suitable recruit has turned into a convoluted saga with both Bob Ayling, chief executive of British Airways, and Rachel Lomax, Permanent Secretary at the Welsh Office, linked to the job but not appointed.

Pirie, who is a youthful 56 with a penchant for rollerblading and bow-ties, fancies following in the footsteps of Sarah, now Baroness, Hogg and the just ennobled Norman Blackwell, who served under John Major.

"I'm offering my services because I believe that the key to the job is creativity and the ability to think of innovative ways to achieve Labour's aims," says Pirie. "I'm not a Tory, I'm not a member of any political party." A Downing Street spokesman gives no inkling as to how Pirie's offer has gone down in the Blair camp. "It is not for us to comment on individual candidates."

News of Labour's victory appears to have been slow reaching some corners of the Tory party. An



invitation to a reception at the autumn party conference, hosted by the Conservative Board of Finance, boasts that guests will have the chance to meet Cabinet ministers.

### Folly paid

THE Queen's racing manager, the Earl of Carnarvon, is introducing paying guests to his Hampshire estate, Highclere. They will be housed in an 18th-century folly, which is being converted into a three-bedroom holiday home by the Landmark Trust at the cost of half a million pounds. The Trust will be allowed to lease the building. "The estate does not have the money to repair these buildings," says the estate architect, Michael Carden. "The Earl won't get anything out of it except solving his fol-

ly repair problem." The paying guests will enjoy a lakeside location and the chance to train their binoculars on the Queen, who regularly stays at Highclere while visiting Newbury races.

### Snapped up

WHATEVER is on offer in Edinburgh, surely the strangest art exhibition of the moment is at the Blackfriars Arts Centre, in Boston, Lincolnshire. The subject is John Redwood. Shadow President of the Board of Trade. Back in February



Prints charming: Redwood

the Boston Monochrome Society took it upon themselves to photograph the Tory MP and reputed Vulcan as he toured Marshall's vegetable processing plant at Newark. Now dozens of prints feature him in various poses, with all manner of vegetables and sporting a white protective coat bearing the word "Visitor". "It's flattering," says Redwood of the show, before hastily making a Euro-point: "The Brussels came from Lincolnshire."

### Mummy's boy

IN time-honoured tradition, Baroness Thatcher has flown to the side of her son Mark after his latest scrape. Detectives raided Thatcher Jr's Cape Town home earlier this month amid allegations that he illegally hired armed policemen as bodyguards. The prodigal son has spent a week holed up in the spanking new Labourdonnais Hotel in Port Louis, capital of Mauritius, but is understood to be back in South Africa with his mother before she, too, nips to Mauritius to give a lecture on the virtues of a regulated economy. "Mark is a regular visitor to our shores," says the High Commission, cheerfully. But unions are planning to demonstrate when La Thatcher arrives, which is unlikely to worry her.



Model role: Winona Ryder

### Tall order

MODELS hoping to relaunch themselves as actresses should send their CVs to Woody Allen, who is about to start filming a satire about the fashion industry. While Kenneth Branagh and Winona Ryder have already been guaranteed parts, Allen's casting tour of Europe's catwalks in search of possible candidates yielded only one girl to his liking.

P.H.S



Scott Thompson

"If you can't stand the heat get into the kitchen"





## THE PAISLEY CARNIVAL

Labour in Scotland needs independent investigation

In three weeks Scotland will have the chance to make the most radical change to the constitution of the United Kingdom for more than 20 years. The creation of a tax-raising Scottish parliament will fundamentally alter the balance of the British State. What Scotland, and its partners in the United Kingdom, need before such a departure is a debate. Instead, however, of being participants in a democratic festival Scotland's voters have become witnesses to a carnival of scandal.

Just as the sleaze allegations surrounding Neil Hamilton overshadowed the discussion of policy issues at the start of the general election, so the state of the Labour Party in the West of Scotland is attracting far more interest than the details of devolution. It is not ideal that a constitutional innovation so significant as Home Rule should be put to the people after a referendum campaign conducted in a few weeks. But when those weeks are dominated by speculation about the future of Renfrewshire MPs rather than delicate questions of tax and trust, it is unlikely that the devolution proposals will enjoy the scrutiny they need.

The Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, has already expressed his irritation that the merits of the devolution argument have been overshadowed by scandal. His irritation is justified, but the fault lies with members of his own party. It is all too understandable that the suicide of the Paisley South MP, Gordon McMaster, should have caused public attention to fall on the maverick in which power has been fought over and abused by Labour politicians in Scotland's wild west.

After the allegations of corruption among Glasgow councillors and the suspension of the Govan MP, Mohammed Sarwar, the Renfrew revelations, like the Tory sleaze scandals, have been seen as symptoms of a party too long in power. Voters have begun to ask if a Labour-dominated Scottish parliament would simply provide more tax-funded jobs for the party's good old boys.

The voters' concern will not be diminished by Labour's treatment of these matters in the

past. Labour politicians knew two years ago that, even by the robust standards of Scottish politics, strong-arm tactics were being deployed by Labour figures in Renfrewshire. The Whips' Office was informed. Questions were asked. And what action was taken? More recently both Mr McMaster and the member for Paisley North, Irene Adams, made repeated attempts to alert the authorities to what they believed was local corruption. Parliament was informed. Questions were asked. And what action was taken?

With Mr McMaster's death, and the leaking of his suicide note, action became inevitable. Labour's leadership dispatched the Party's Chief Whip, Nick Brown, to conduct an investigation. There is no reason to believe that Mr Brown will be anything other than as thorough, and tough, as possible. But will his actions be enough to restore public faith? Is it right that a matter in which the behaviour of Labour whips is an issue should be investigated by a Labour whip? And will voters be satisfied that an affair which arises from Labour's long grip on power and could involve the misuse of public money is being investigated by a Labour politician, however honourable?

Would the voters of Taiton have been better served if a Tory whip had taken Sir Gordon Downey's place? Why should the voters of Renfrew be denied an independent inquiry? It is in everyone's interest that this matter is dealt with authoritatively. Suspending should not become scapegoating, and those accused in their absence, such as the Renfrew West MP, Tommy Graham, should have the opportunity to make their case openly. Conservatives may be tempted to gloat but they, and others sincerely sceptical about devolution, should realise that their principled objections will no more engage the voters' attention at the moment than a sermon would a football crowd. For Labour, an invitation to outside figures to investigate the Renfrew affair would show a commitment to good government which would allow the party to make the case for a Scottish parliament with greater confidence.

## OUT OF ITS DEPTH

On Greenpeace, BP has right, the law and science on its side

Greenpeace UK's latest North Sea stunt, the unlawful occupation of British Petroleum's Stena Dee oil rig, has ended in court—but in less serious trouble than its actions merited. BP has offered to suspend its £1.4 million lawsuit to recover losses estimated at £250,000 for each day of the occupation, including £60,000 a day for hire of the rig. BP recognises Greenpeace's right to campaign. It asks only that Greenpeace cease its unlawful sabotage of its operations.

Greenpeace, which complained that BP's suit could have put it out of business, has greeted this offer with a gracelessness that may betray its ambition to pose as martyr to "big oil". It continues to claim, unfoundedly, that BP is using its muscle "to stifle free and open discussion about environmental dangers that will affect us all". On the contrary, the company has behaved with immense restraint. It also, in this particular dispute, has the more solid environmental case.

What Greenpeace is agitating against is the development of the new oilfields of the "Atlantic Margin", west of Shetland, of which the BP Forties field is the first to be exploited commercially. Greenpeace argues not only that this will damage the immediate environment, but that since unsustainable global warming would result from using the world's existing hydrocarbon reserves, it is folly to open up new fields. Oil companies, it says, should instead be investing in renewable sources of energy, such as solar and wind power. It wants Britain to set a unilateral example, by phasing out the use of fossil fuels within 40 years.

The Government rejects the narrower argument that local environmental factors have not been taken sufficiently into

account. On the wider argument, Greenpeace has half a point—as both Shell and BP, which plans to increase production of solar energy tenfold in the next decade, readily concede. But only half a point. Renewable energy technology may help to reduce fossil fuel consumption. For purposes such as electricity generation, BP believes that solar power could, in some climates, be economically viable within ten years. But renewable energy is decades away from substituting for oil and natural gas. Meanwhile, the priority should be to phase out coal, a far more potent greenhouse gas, and the most cost-effective way to do this is to replace it with oil and natural gas—as China, laudably, is making efforts to do.

If such realistic calculations offend Greenpeace's ideas of the politically correct, it would do most practical good by campaigning for double-glazing and other forms of energy-saving. In BP, which takes global warming seriously and includes in its corporate strategy conservation, transfers of energy-efficient technology to developing countries and research into climate change, it would find a willing partner. But such low-key work is not Greenpeace's trademark.

If Greenpeace is forced by the troubles it has brought on itself to retrench, that would create space for a more mature environmental debate in this country. In that debate, Greenpeace's antics are not only an irrelevance; they can even, as happened in the case of Brent Spar a year ago, cost companies and taxpayers millions, all to pay for a less desirable environmental outcome. Its talent for catchy slogans—in this case, the simplistic "no to new oil"—is no substitute for sound environmental science.

## THE QUEEN AND DYER

A royal visit to Amritsar would be appropriate and helpful

The Queen's forthcoming state visit to India should, by rights, be a joyous one. Her love for India is abundant, as is the obvious respect in which she is held by Indians of all classes. A growing row, however, focused on her proposed visit to Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikhs, threatens to curdle the spirit.

Indar Kumar Gujral, India's Prime Minister, is reported to have advised the Queen to drop Amritsar from her itinerary. It is said that her presence in the city of the "Jallianwala Bagh massacre" would upset those Sikhs who are themselves of Sikh origin. Many of them have come out in favour of a royal visit to Amritsar, as have senior Sikh leaders in Punjab itself.

Yesterday Gurcharan Singh Tohra, a senior Sikh religious leader, pointed out that members of the British Royal Family, as well as British Cabinet ministers, have visited Amritsar in the past. Mr Tohra, who commands a considerable following, spoke darkly of "people with vested interests deliberately trying to put the Queen in an embarrassing position". Whatever are the "vested interests" in which he refers, he is certainly correct when he speaks of the pointless awkwardness which has now been thrust upon the visit.

None of this need have happened, and there is still time for matters to be resolved. Naturally, the Queen will not visit Amritsar if the Indian Prime Minister does not want her to. By the same token, however, Mr Gujral must understand that her visit is intended as a way to heal wounds and cement important ties. It is not intended as a slap from Dyer, delivered viciously by the royal hand, 78 years after Jallianwala Bagh.

reflection and prayer. Amritsar is revered by Sikhs as their own "Vatican", and a visit by the Queen would also have been an elegant way to take account of the sentiments of those Britons who are themselves of Sikh origin. Many of them have come out in favour of a royal visit to Amritsar, as have senior Sikh leaders in Punjab itself.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

### Changed nature of teen pregnancies

From Mrs Victoria Gillick

Sir, Teenage pregnancies are not a "serious problem" as far as numbers go (letter, August 14). Throughout this century the pregnancy rate among 15 to 19-year-olds has never exceeded 8 per cent, and even today 95 per cent of teenagers do not get pregnant. Among schoolgirls the rate has never (except in 1990) even reached 1 per cent.

Within these comforting statistics, however, there exists a very real problem which has worsened progressively during the past 25 years: unmarried, state-dependent, teenage motherhood. In 1971, when the teenage birth rate was 5 per cent, and the teenage marriage rate was 10 per cent, three quarters of all teenage mothers were young married women aged 17 to 19. But by the mid-1970s the scene had begun to change: legislation allowing easier access to divorce, contraception and abortion; devaluing of Christian moral values; marriage, and the "family unit" in the popular media; a downturn in the economy and other social changes combined to make marriage and birthrates tumble, while divorce and abortion rates soared.

A generation later we are faced with the consequences of this liberal anarchy. And not surprisingly, it is those at the bottom of the social heap who have come off worst.

Today, the teenage marriage rate is only 1 per cent, and although the teenage birth rate has almost halved, 92 per cent of teenage pregnancies now occur outside marriage, a third ending in abortion.

Ten years of "safe sex" education, and a doubling of the use of contraceptives by adolescents in the last five years alone, has only succeeded in sexualising younger and younger children without achieving any significant change in the under-16 pregnancy and abortion rates.

We certainly do need a radical rethink on the issue. More of the same can only make things worse.

Yours faithfully,  
VICTORIA GILICK  
(Director),  
2 Old Market,  
Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.  
August 14.

### Hindley's remorse

From the Earl of Longford

Sir, As a faithful reader of *The Times* for some 80 years I have never been so dismayed as I am today by the heading of your article "Why the RA should hang Myra". Even if Myra were today the evil person still malignantly pursued by the tabloids you would still be forgetting your duty to her as a fellow human being.

I have known Myra Hindley for 29 years. I know her today to be a good religious woman, as do the Catholic priests who have attended her in recent years and the Reverend Peter Timms, former prison governor and now a Methodist minister.

The Parole Board has recommended her for transfer to an open prison, generally regarded as a step towards freedom.

No one could be more haunted than Myra is by the horrific crimes in which more than 30 years ago she participated as an infatuated young accomplice. No one could be more distressed by the lifelong tragedies she has helped to inflict on the victims and their relatives.

But she has struggled throughout the long years to make amends, though that can never be fully possible in this life.

Yours,  
FRANK LONGFORD,  
House of Lords.  
August 18.

### A-level lit crit

From Mr Adrian Room

Sir, In his article on the marking of A-level essays (The pupils are up to scratch), August 15, Chris Ramsey singles out the following concluding sentence as a model of clarity: "Candidide is rooted in its time, but raises questions which are still central to us: it is a text about what it is to be a human being, and for this, if for no other reason, it has survived."

Model of clarity maybe, but what does it say? It is a bland statement that could apply to any classic. Substitute *Anna Karenina*, *Hamlet*, *Silas Marner* or *Tristram Shandy* for *Candidide* and it says just as much, or as little.

Could it have been a catch-all closure recommended by the candidate's teacher in order to leave a pleasant taste in the examiner's mouth?

Yours faithfully,  
ADRIAN ROOM,  
12 High Street,  
St Martin's, Stamford, Lincolnshire.  
August 15.

From Dr Margaret Davies

Sir, Mr Chris Ramsey says not approve, but I must say I think that "Emma Bovary is a bit of a loser" is one of the best examples of succinct language I have ever read.

Yours faithfully,  
MARGARET DAVIES,  
Silver How,  
Llanhennoch, Caerleon, Gwent.  
August 15.

### Academy must embrace all sports

From Dr Paul D. Jackson

Sir, The main benefits from a single national sports academy (report and leading article, August 15) are the common goal of excellence, and the sharing of knowledge and ideas from a wide range of sports.

The full potential for wider application of developments in fitness training, skill acquisition, sports psychology, the application of sports science, and sports medicine is lost if not all of our sports are included. The sports that remain within the proposed academy will lose from this as much as those excluded.

The Government must review the original objectives for a national sports academy drawn up by the last Government after extensive consultation with those involved in the training and management of elite athletes. An academy that does not involve all of our sports is less likely to meet the objective of sporting success across a broad range of activities.

Yours sincerely,  
PAUL JACKSON,  
Hill Farmhouse,  
Seend Hill, Seend, Wiltshire.  
August 15.

From the Director of the

National Playing Fields Association

Sir, The disagreement over which sports organisations should benefit from the lottery-financed sports academy masks a much more important argument over sports and sports funding in this country.

No one disagrees with the proposition that we should be trying to produce more world champions in a whole range of sports, and to that end money will presumably be targeted at the potential superstars who can bring gold medals home for Britain.

But sport exists at the other end of the scale too—where a few children throw their coats on the ground for a game of soccer or rounders. The places where they can do that in safety are vanishing all the time.

The National Playing Fields Association applied for lottery funding to provide basic sports equipment for children and young people in a number of recreation grounds. The application was turned down in 1995, and our appeal against that decision waited two years for a reply.

A hundred million pounds can ap-

parently be found for champions and high achievers, but a request for simple facilities to enable the nation's children to enjoy sport in a safe environment gets a very low priority.

Is this really the people's lottery?

Yours faithfully,  
ELSA DAVIES,  
Director,  
National Playing Fields Association,  
25 Ovington Square, SW3.  
August 18.

From Ms B. C. Morrish

Sir, Well might the British Government be impressed enough with our Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) to consider an equivalent here in the UK. However, your leading article simplifies its organisation and underestimates its success.

The AIS is not a simple institution where athletes of all disciplines train together. It is administered from a headquarters in Canberra, while most athletes train elsewhere, many near their own homes, under the guidance of state-run or specialist AIS departments.

The institute certainly has had some problems co-ordinating the sporting development of a relatively small population spread over a large area, but its success has been significant. Your emphasis on the one admittedly mystifying failure of Australian sport over the past couple of decades, namely singles tennis, is unfair. In other sports (including doubles tennis) Australia has captured more medals per head of population at Olympic and world championship level than almost any other country.

However, while the talents of many of our sportsmen and women have been developed through the AIS, it has been their identification and encouragement at grassroots level, through local clubs and schools, that has ensured a supply of quality cricketers, runners, swimmers, etc.

England needs to follow Australia's lead and create a national sporting academy which can co-ordinate the identification and development of raw talent from all sporting disciplines.

Yours sincerely,  
BRONWYN MORRISH,  
54 Evergreen Drive,  
Hull, East Yorkshire.  
b.c.morrish@btisc.hull.ac.uk  
August 18.

### Japanese war crimes

From Mr A. H. P. Humphrey

Sir, I salute with respect those Japanese veterans who want the atrocities committed by the Imperial Army in countries Japan invaded and occupied in 1941-45 to be acknowledged and not covered up in Japanese school textbooks (report, August 14). That must not be the end of the matter, however.

On September 18, 1945, a news-sheet issued by the Australian Military Forces Abroad reported that Colonel Suga, commander-in-charge of all prison camps in Borneo, committed suicide at Labuan by cutting his throat with a blunt table knife.

As the Allies gained the upper hand in the Pacific, Suga, allegedly on orders from Tokyo, had planned that there should be no survivors of the camps to be liberated, and the figures tell the tale. By August 1945 there were only six survivors from 2,000 prisoners in Sandakan camps and 700 out of 2,000 had died in the camp at Kuching.

In prisons in Borneo for three and a

half years, I was painfully aware that few of those who perished died quickly. They died from slow deliberate starvation, beatings and bashing, forced labour and, on the "death march" from Sandakan to the interior, from exhaustion.

A few Japanese suicides cannot expiate such horrific crimes. Nor are they the responsibility of the present generation of Japanese or the present Japanese Government. The responsibility rested ultimately with Emperor Hirohito, who offered to abdicate, but Douglas MacArthur decided he should remain on his throne.

Only Emperor Akihito can now save the consciences of his subjects and stop the manipulation of school books by making an apology to the heads of states whose nationals suffered these dreadful brutalities.

Yours faithfully,  
A. H. P. HUMPHREY,  
(British Resident, Labuan,  
Straits Settlements, 1940-42,  
14 Ambrose Place,  
Worthing, West Sussex.  
August 14.

### Mir damage

From Mr M. R. Carter

Sir, You report (August 15) that some members of the Russian space agency want Vasil Tshilyev to be punished for allegedly "miscalculating the weight of the craft involved in June's collision". Calculation of momentum would have been necessary to determine the force needed to bring the module to rest relative to Mir, but the equations require the mass of the craft, not its weight.

An object in orbit is essentially weightless, but, unless it is a certain type of subatomic particle, it cannot be massless. Though it weighed not a whit (or a newton for that matter) where it was, the spacecraft inflicted considerable damage by virtue of inertia, an inescapable consequence of its mass.

I hazard a guess that the Russian language must make a clear distinction between weight and mass or it would never have allowed the Russians to have a successful space programme at all.

Yours sincerely,  
M. R. CARTER,  
89 Malvern Way,  
Hastings, East Sussex.  
August 15.

### Sporting psalm

From Dr Ian Olson

Sir, The "chase" in which the over-heated heart is panting in Tate and Brady's hymn based on Psalm 42 (letters, July 25, August 1, 11, 15) is no bloodsport.

It is merely what in Scotland we would call a deer forest. Why not leave the poor thing there?

Yours faithfully,  
IAN OLSON,  
20 Burns Road, Aberdeen.  
August 15.

### Intelligence tests

From Mr Graham King

Sir, The French psychologist credited by Tony Buzan with the invention of intelligence tests ("Tests that freed an underclass", *Mind* Sports Olympiad supplement, August 11) was Alfred Binet (1857-1911). His researches were later used by Stanford University in California to set up intelligence tests—hence the name Stanford-Binet.

Binet observed the different stages of child development—such as dressing, washing, doing up buttons, tying shoelaces—and gave a mental age to each.

Stanford University later related this mental age (MA) to the child's chronological age (CA) and produced an intelligence quotient: if the two ages are the same then the child's IQ is 100. With CA 10 and MA 12 the child's IQ is 120.

Binet as these can be used with groups; but I believe that Alfred Binet's original tests were carried out on a one-to-one basis, as is the case today.

Yours faithfully,  
GRAHAM KING,  
25 Shelley Avenue,  
St Marychurch, Torquay, Devon.  
August 11.

### Essex man

From Mr Ian Liston

Sir, Dr Chris Pond (letter, August 18) is surely erroneous in his assertion that Essex is God's Own County. That appellation belonged to Surrey until six weeks ago, when my wife and I moved to the new title-holder, Sussex.

Yours faithfully,  
IAN LISTON,  
1 Nyes Hill, Wincham Lane,  
Bolney, West Sussex.  
hissboo@msn.com  
August 18.

### Lifesaving string to whistle's blow

From Group Captain

V. H. P. LYNHAM, DSO (ret'd)

Sir, If the Reverend John Titchhurst (letter, August 15) is ever unfortunate enough to be involved in an aircraft coming down in the sea out of sight of land I suggest that he might find the whistle attached to his lifejacket a great deal more use than a radio tracking device.

He will soon realise that number one priority is to get into a dinghy/life raft. Swimming in even a moderate sea he might well be out of sight, and out of earshot of his occupants at 25 yards; at night he would almost certainly be out of sight at ten yards. That is when a whistle, with its penetrating power, can be "something actually useful".

I speak with conviction, having commanded the first long-range air-sea rescue squadron operating in the North Sea (and elsewhere) during 1942, during which time official records state "the squadron was directly responsible for the successful rescue of 55 members of aircrew". Not one of those rescued had taken more than three or four minutes to get into his dinghy and most ditchings were by night. Whistles became standard aircrew issue in 1941.

Yours faithfully,  
V. H. P. LYNHAM,  
Blue Pines,  
Yew Tree Lane,  
Rotherfield, East Sussex.  
August 15.

From Dr J. A. Collings-Wells

Sir, Clearly Mr Titchhurst, if a regular reader of *The Times*, has forgotten an inspiring article that appeared in the paper on March 22, 1962.

Your anonymous correspondent recalled the night, 22 years earlier, when, as captain of a destroyer on convoy duty in the Atlantic, he rescued the chief officer of a merchant ship—one of 12 just torpedoed and sunk by German U-boats. He had been ordered to go back and search for survivors.

I heard in the middle of the ocean 500 miles from land on a dark night the clear, penetrating sound of a whistle blowing. It was very eerie. I immediately stopped and went astern and as the way came off my ship I heard a man below me calling out: "Don't go away, that destroyer. Don't go away."

I looked over the side and there he was going down my starboard side on a piece of wood... "Stop starboard", but I was too late and I washed him off his plank. I could hear him calling: "I can't swim. Don't go away", but I reckoned his lifebelt would hold him.

I took the ship back alongside him and picked him up. He was the Chief Officer of the *Whitford Point*. He had been three hours in the water and was, in his own words, waiting for a Sunderland (flying boat) in the morning...

Before landing at Londonderry, the officer came and thanked me for saving his life. "Don't thank me," I said. "Thank your Creator for guiding my ship to you, and your whistle." "A friend told me to carry a whistle," he said. "You had better find him and give him a good dinner," I replied.

Yours truly,  
JOHN COLLINGS-WELLS,  
Rivercroft,  
Undershore Road,  
Lymington, Hampshire.  
August 15.

From Mr Geoffrey Atkinson

Sir, Mr Titchhurst makes a nice point in suggesting that airline safety jackets fitted with radio tracking devices rather than whistles would be of more use, should he need to call for help in the mighty ocean. I can tell him that airlines worldwide, including my employer, would welcome the device if it enabled them to track the thousands of lifejackets which passengers steal annually from seat pouches on their aircraft.

I plan an anthology of the explanations given by such miscreants when prosecutions commence.

In the meantime airlines will continue prompt replacement of stolen safety jackets to ensure that should passengers find themselves floating around in the mighty ocean they will at least have a whistle to rely on.

Yours faithfully,  
GEOFFREY ATKINSON  
(Group lawyer),  
Monarch Airlines Limited,  
London Luton Airport,  
Luton, Bedfordshire.  
August 15.

### She, who must be...

From Mr Henry Wickens

Sir, I must take issue with your report ("Cartoon sexism bugs women in search of heroes", August 18) over one of the examples it gives of "non-assertive" female characters in children's TV.

It is perfectly clear that Little Wee in *Bill and Ben* runs the whole show. She whisks the ultimate sanction for the under-fives, the Power of Bedtime, thus putting her on an equal footing with Zedee in *The Magic Roundabout* (male) and the sun-god baby in *Tootles* (sex unspecified).

Yours faithfully,  
HENRY WICKENS,  
14 Kalkwile,  
L-7681 Waldbillig, Luxembourg.  
hwickens@europarl.eu.int  
August 19.

Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number—0171-782 5046.  
e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

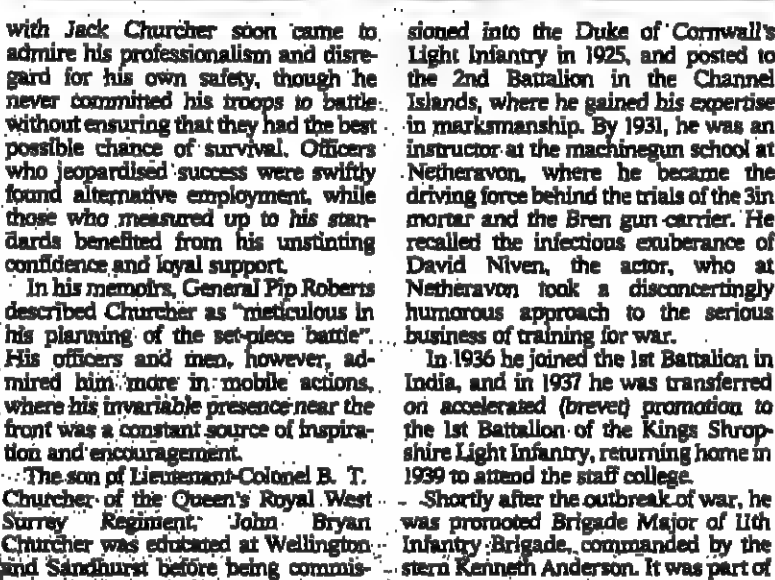






**MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN CHURCHER**

His second DSO was awarded in 1946 for his outstanding leadership of 159th Brigade during the campaign and its aftermath. Those who served



He married Rosamond Parkin in 1937. They had a son and two daughters. He was widowed in 1993, and two years later he married Pauline Thompson, who had nursed him in his declining years. She and his children survive him.

With wellington boots, bicycle and loud-hailer, for more than thirty years Halladay

William Parry-Jones is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

[illegible]



## DEGREE COURSE VACANCIES 1997-98

## UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE HOTLINE NUMBERS FOR DEGREE COURSES

UP-TO-DATE degree vacancies appear today for science courses for students aiming to convert their A-level grades into a place at university or college this autumn.

Places at popular institutions are being taken up more rapidly than in previous years as students try to claim the last "free" places before the Government's introduction of annual £1,000 tuition fees and phasing out of maintenance grants next year.

Fully updated degree vacancies are published in *The Times* in a three-day cycle throughout August, with arts and social sciences on Thursdays and Mondays, engineering and technology on Fridays and Tuesdays, and science on Saturdays and Wednesdays.

An asterisk shows courses are part of modular schemes, available in a variety of combinations. All others are identified by the course code in the Ucas handbook.

## AGRICULTURE/AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

Aberdeen, D222, D223, D224, D225, D226, D227, D228, D229, D230, D231, D232, D233, D234, D235, D236, D237, D238, D239, D240, D241, D242, D243, D244, D245, D246, D247, D248, D249, D250, D251, D252, D253, D254, D255, D256, D257, D258, D259, D260, D261, D262, D263, D264, D265, D266, D267, D268, D269, D270, D271, D272, D273, D274, D275, D276, D277, D278, D279, D280, D281, D282, D283, D284, D285, D286, D287, D288, D289, D290, D291, D292, D293, D294, D295, D296, D297, D298, D299, D300, D301, D302, D303, D304, D305, D306, D307, D308, D309, D310, D311, D312, D313, D314, D315, D316, D317, D318, D319, D320, D321, D322, D323, D324, D325, D326, D327, D328, D329, D330, D331, D332, D333, D334, D335, D336, D337, D338, D339, D340, D341, D342, D343, D344, D345, D346, D347, D348, D349, D350, D351, D352, D353, D354, D355, D356, D357, D358, D359, D360, D361, D362, D363, D364, D365, D366, D367, D368, D369, D370, D371, D372, D373, D374, D375, D376, D377, D378, D379, D380, D381, D382, D383, D384, D385, D386, 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## ITC plans to filter out smoking could start a trend Censor's insensitivity towards the new taboo

In Sligo in the northwest of Ireland last week a never-before-seen film of W. B. Yeats was shown. There on screen, laughing, talking, was the great poet himself, enjoying himself on a cruise in 1927. And what did the crowd of adoring who had come from all over to the annual Yeats summer school make of this glimpse from beyond the grave?

"He's smoking!" If W. B. had walked in the door, he would have been shown out the back. To compound the shock, the reel, taken by a fellow passenger and unearthed recently by a Canadian scholar, showed Mrs Yeats, too, with a bag in her mouth, their two hated heads closing together to light from the same match in the gesture that seemed so debonair in the hinkered Twenties. Didn't they know that smoking causes lung cancer and other diseases?

Absolute truth cannot compromise. I hope that if the Independent Television Commission gets its wish to ban smoking on commercial television before 10pm (except where dramatically relevant — that is, to show somebody as a serial rapist), they will make the ban retrospective. The censors will have a lovely time, cutting the cigarettes out of *Casablanca* and old newsreels like the shots at Yalta where the Great Powers clearly felt their power enhanced by the white cylinder held between the fingers. Ideal for this job would be those who scissor out the naughty bits of films for showing on aircraft.

The second time I saw *Shine*, it was over the Atlantic and the scene at the Royal Academy of Music where the young David Helfgott forgets his trousers when answering the telephone was cut out. Oh sure, this scene was the first big hint that the little genius was going crazy, but what did it matter when morals were at stake?

But ours is a permissive society. It won't tolerate too many bans, just a few. The task of moral guardians now is to pick and choose. The simplest rule is just to go into reverse. Everything once taboo becomes totem and vice versa. Like foxhunting and homosexuality. Or cigarettes and bosoms. Just as smoking has gone on the shock-horror list, the bare female breast has come off. In the United States women have won the right to bare naked chests in public. Men have the freedom, so why should women be deprived? Although there are plenty of reasons why not — in each sex when the clothes come off some parts look nuder than others, and they are not the same parts. The equality argument has won out and it could happen here. Fags out, boobs in.

The wish to deglamorise smoking on

television could be satisfied more easily by drawing a time line. No, not the "watershed", the imaginary line drawn to divide children's imaginary from their real bed-times. Rather, an on-screen warning to children that in the past things looked very different from today and someday will look different again. Then there would be no need to censor Nigger Jim out of *Huckleberry Finn* and pretend that Agatha Christie wrote *Ten Little Indians* when she wrote something quite different, no need to pretend that H. G. Wells and other social reformers pre-Holocaust were not great enthusiasts for eugenics nor to think that Maurice Chevalier had anything dirty on his mind when he sang that hymn to paedophilia, *Thank Heaven for Little Girls*.

How much simpler it would be for the ITC to put out public health advice against smoking and then to let dramatists get on with the plays. The television screen could also say that if we had known in the past what we know now, ITV would not have been built upon the faces of housewives saying how happy they were with their whiter wash.



BRENDA MADDOX

HOW'S this for incorrectness? Ireland seems very much like Britain. All the British television channels are on offer, the papers look the same, the headlines much the same: is the Princess of Wales or John Hume about to make a big mistake? Even the media news sounds familiar: "Radio Ireland fails to woo young listeners." If only RTE, Ireland's BBC, were to buy Ulster TV, Northern Ireland's Channel 3, there could be all-Ireland television, like rugby. It won't happen.

IN SLIGO to work on a biography of Yeats, the journalist in me is struck by the heavy use the English-language press and politicians make of the old wizard's words. Just on Ireland alone, leader writers dip freely into the brimming with rich phrases like "great haired, little room," and "a terrible beauty," and "the indomitable Irishry" to make one editorial point or another. Fair enough, but the all-purpose Yeats is not confined to things Irish but lends itself nicely to the apocalyptic, garbled as needed. There would be white space indeed in the leader pages without all the things falling apart, slouchings toward Bethlehem, cold eyes being cast and peace processes dropping slowly. In my growing collection of favours, pride of place goes to a line from a baseball feature in *The New Yorker*: "The centerfielder cannot hold."

## Comedians fear loss of breeding ground

The future of comedy is being jeopardised, says Milly Jenkins

At the opening of the Edinburgh Television Festival on Friday, two of Britain's most successful sitcom writers, Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran, will give a speech accusing broadcasting executives of failing to nurture and support comedy talent. The creators of *Birds of a Feather*, *Good Night, Sweetheart* and *Shine On Harvey Moon* say that the BBC and ITV are stifling talent by depriving writers and producers of money and creative control. But while they voice their concerns about the state of television comedy, many of their colleagues in the audience, and those appearing at the arts festival, will also be worrying about the future of radio comedy, long recognised as a training ground for new talent and the origin of some of television's top comedy shows.

One radio show, in particular, has produced some of Britain's best comedians — Radio 4's *Weekending*, the Friday night satirical sketch show. There is no such thing as a College of Comedy, but the nearest thing to it is an apprenticeship on *Weekending*. Griff Rhys Jones, David Jason, Tracy Ullman and more recently David Baddiel, Armando Iannucci and Harry Hill are just some of the talents that have been discovered and nurtured since its birth in 1970. But the longest-running comedy show in radio history is to be scrapped in April's Radio 4 reshuffle, leaving many ex-*Weekenders* wondering where future comedians will get their first break.

*Weekending* is one of the few comedy programmes with an open-door policy. Anyone can go along to the rowdy Wednesday lunchtime meetings, at Broadcasting House, to pitch ideas for sketches or one-liners. Others fax their contributions. The producers will consider anyone and although the financial rewards are not great — about £12 a joke and £25 a sketch — for many it is a first step.

David Baddiel, in Edinburgh this week with his *Too Much Information Tour*, started going to the meetings soon after leaving Cambridge. "They let anyone come in off the street, so it was always a bit of a soup kitchen," he says. "But I remember being very excited when I got my first half-minute sketch on and heard my name in the long list of credits at the end."

Baddiel's career path is in some ways a classic one — from the Footlights at Cambridge to the BBC's Light Entertainment Department. But he says, although *Weekending* is an entry point for comedians of all genres, its force is in training writers with a nose for news and scathing satire. Writing partners Mark Burton and John O'Farrell sharpened their wits on the show, before graduating to *Spitting Image* and currently *Have I Got News For You*. "It was a great springboard," says Burton, who has just written a new sitcom, *The Peter Principle*. "The open-door policy gave you your first contacts and your first experience of being in the BBC and working with other people."



Harry Hill was one of the talents discovered and nurtured on the BBC's *Weekending*

Guy Jenkin says: "It taught us the discipline of writing about news stories." Jenkin met his partner Andrew Hamilton on the show in the late Seventies. They went on to create *Drop the Dead Donkey*, *Weekending* runs for 44 weeks and having to come up with half an hour of material every week was useful training.

Everyone talks with fondness about the show, although some agree that it is probably time, as Mark Burton says, "for it to go to the great sketch in the sky". In the early days, its lampooning of politicians seemed risqué, even when *Nationwide* presenter Michael Barrett introduced each

sketch. But now that satire has become more mainstream, and satirists such as Rory Bremner, Mark Thomas and Chris Morris more savages, many think it has lost its edge. One problem was that it never had a live audience. "It was never as tough a test for writers as it might have been," says Bill Dacre, a previous producer. "We never knew if people thought it was funny."

And while it was a great opportunity for new writers, their inexperience sometimes showed. "It could be a bit like the blind leading the blind," says Baddiel. The BBC is asking in-house and independent producers to come up with a new format for the same Friday night show. But they do not know if it will have an open-door policy. "This is not a death knell to comedy or new talent," argues Andrew Caspari, one of Radio 4's commissioning editors. The new schedules, he points out, have more time dedicated to comedy, including an 11 o'clock slot every night.

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# The art of spinning



Peter Mandelson, left, and John Prescott: Labour is starting to find that the co-ordination of messages (to say nothing of big egos) is just that little bit harder in government

**S**o, John "The Shark" Prescott and Peter "The Crab" Mandelson cannot agree what to say about those terrible German Millennium Dome builders. The Deputy Prime Minister says the British construction industry should hang its head in shame. The Minister without Portfolio says the Brits have done bloody well out of the (his) Millennium Project, and Mr Prescott, who is DPM in name only, can go whistle. Enter the Chinese maven crab, siding in on cue to complete a classic Whinell farce.

I hesitate to say this, but it looks as if new Labour is starting to find that the co-ordination of messages (to say nothing of big egos) is just that little bit harder in government than in opposition. It is one thing to sit in some House of Commons garret what insult to hurt at which Cabinet minister for the next television bulletin. It is quite another — when the proverbial you-know-what hits the fan — to square Downing Street, or the relevant ministers, or the private offices, or the press offices, in time for a World At One bid in 20 minutes time, with the radio car on its way. Particularly when the ministers concerned dislike each other.

How piquant that such a cock-up should involve the Master of Spin himself, Mr Mandelson, who says that "information control" was at the heart of his election strategy, and is supposed to be at the heart of his strategy for government.

It may be a minor incident — compared with the Tory Cabinet's disagreements over Europe, this is a minor league — but it should start to dispel the myth of the infallibility of new Labour's spin-doctor.

According to the energetic

**New Labour's spin-doctoring skills will face their true test when the political honeymoon ends and Tony Blair comes under fire, says Charles Lewington**

BBC correspondent Nicholas Jones, this is a machine that can move mountains, shift thousands of votes overnight, and exercise such influence over news broadcasts that all other spin-doctors should go into immediate retirement.

In his account of the election, *Campaign 1997*, Jones claimed that Labour's news managers turned a near-certain Blair victory into a landslide owing to their ability to persuade journalists that the Conservatives were incompetent, arrogant, and split down the middle — as if they needed persuading.

Such is the BBC reporter's gushing admiration for Labour's news management skills that at one point he is forced to emphasise that he in no way intends to demean the part Tony Blair played in winning the election.

But Jones fails to draw any distinction between the challenges of opposition and those of government. It is a rather different art form which requires different skills.

Isn't this the voice of an embittered former Tory spin-doctor, envious of new Labour's news management skills, and looking for the first opportunity to stick the knife in?

Don't get me wrong. I am envious of the politicalisation of the Downing Street press machinery, the appointment of departmental political press spokesmen (and women) and the updating of the completely useless "Cable-net" computer system.

Michael Heseltine's EDCP Committee, which met daily to try to manage the news, was no large and unwieldy, I counted 25 people at one meeting in Hezza's room, sunk



Charles Lewington: envious of news management skills

deep into his comfortable sofa. We couldn't discuss political issues, with civil servants present, and it was difficult to discuss government matters without civil servants. So we ended up with the worst of both worlds.

The Cable-net system was derided by civil servants and ministers alike. Steven Norris used to list every trivial ministerial engagement on it — short of dinner dates with a girlfriend — to give the impression that he was the busiest minister in government.

The failure of Conservative Central Office to exercise much, if any, control over the Government's information machinery was a source of huge frustration. But the reality is that because of the Conservative Government's

productive. The briefings were confused and often contradictory. Statements were made up on the hoof, and political journalists would often remark to me that "the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing".

Interestingly, in each of the three cases, new Labour had been caught indulging in hypocrisy on a grand scale: Harman using a grammar-school system which Labour was (then) committed to opposing; Blair pretending to be tough on unions in one breath, while conceding to their bottom-line demands in another; and new Labour asserting its conversion to Thatcherism by promising to sell off National Air Traffic Services, while assuring union leaders of the opposite in private.

The moral is that if you are caught speaking with forked tongue, you can't rely on your tongue to talk your way out of the problem. Since the election, new Labour has yet to come under political attack, partly because the press has respected the honeymoon, and

partly because of the grieving process in the Conservative Party. There have been skirmishes over the share portfolio of Lord Simon of Highbury, a new Labour business appointee, but nothing more substantial to test the defensive skills of the spin-masters.

The few minor alarms have been dealt with deftly. The break-up of Robin Cook's marriage was neat news management, although not every jilted wife will accept that one hour is a reasonable amount of time to decide whether to end a marriage. The saga of the Millennium Dome does not show that new Labour is "coming apart at the seams", as David

Willens rather ambitiously described the incident on Monday, but that news management in opposition is rather simpler than news management in government.

And only when things really start hotting up for the Prime Minister can we test whether new Labour's spin-doctoring skills are real or simply a well-spun myth.

● The author is a freelance journalist, and former Director of Communications for the Conservative Party

## THE LISTENER

THE NEWS BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### A fresh role for Gwyneth

CHERIE BLAIR, who elegantly slipped into the role of guest editor at *Prima* magazine last year, appears to have started a trend. US *Marie Claire* is to have Gwyneth Paltrow as editor of its Christmas edition.

According to the article, a helpline for lawyers revealed "alarming levels of cocaine and heroin addiction among solicitors and barristers". No statistics were offered. Could this be because, of 44 lawyers who have called the helpline since May, only two calls were drug-related? By chance the *Standard* was also running a special feature on the druggy lawyers in the TV drama *This Life*.



Gwyneth Paltrow

"We thought she might be too upset but she came right in and chaired the features meetings," said an impressed *Marie Claire* source. However, she denied the Cherie Blair precedent. "Everybody knows it was Glenda Bailey who invented this when she got her Christmas edition of *Marie Claire* UK edited by Joan Collins."

### Wrong numbers

AS Camelot directors lick their wounds over the loss of their £600,000 court case, news reaches *The Listener* that the strain might be getting to the company's staff. After every draw Camelot minions immediately fax the Press Association to confirm the winning numbers. However, of late they have been getting the numbers wrong. "It is incredible that they, of all people, could get it wrong. But they do —

frequently," an insider at PA said. "To make it worse, one night one of us thought we had won the jackpot."

### Quiet days

AUGUST is the cruellest month for newswriters desperate to find something to fill the news pages. Few come more inventive than the *Evening Standard*, which recently carried a splash headline "Warning on Addict Lawyers".

According to the article, a helpline for lawyers revealed "alarming levels of cocaine and heroin addiction among solicitors and barristers". No statistics were offered. Could this be because, of 44 lawyers who have called the helpline since May, only two calls were drug-related? By chance the *Standard* was also running a special feature on the druggy lawyers in the TV drama *This Life*.

### Islington man

REGULAR fans of Talk Radio will know that Danny Baker's Saturday football show is sponsored by the *News of the World*. Recently Danny Kelly, Baker's co-host, thought he would try his hand at attracting a sponsor. On air he joked that he was sponsored by the *Islington Gazette*. Amazingly the *Gazette* took the bait.



Danny Baker

"The paper now sponsors Danny Kelly for £1 a show," said a Talk Radio spokeswoman proudly. "It gets mentioned four times each week, which we think is jolly good value."

## Style is of the essence

**E**ighteen of us were seated at an alfresco lunch in the depths of rural Gascony two weeks ago, and I hadn't thought of *Wapping* for at least three days. Then my neighbour turned and subjected me to a public trial: *The Times* had described somebody as an "author and writer". What had I to say about that?

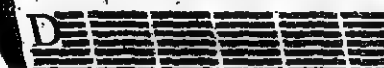
The *foie gras* melted as I mounted an unconvincing defence and, with hindsight, I wish that I had had to hand the 291-page booklet published at *The Times* last week and given to every member of the staff. The second edition of the 1995 version of *The Times Style Guide* provides writers and sub-editors with a quick reference to contentious points of grammar and spelling and determines how *The Times* is written. It would have demonstrated to my Wykehamist inquisitor, a prominent London barrister, how hard *The Times* and other newspapers try to maintain standards of correct English usage as they edit at high speed hundreds of thousands of words a day.

The responsibility for maintaining standards at *The Times* throughout the 40 to 60 pages of the daily paper belongs to Tim Austin, the chief revise editor. He starts work at 2.30pm, reads a proof of every page, checks reports and features for accuracy and tone, corrects errors of style and grammar, and works until past midnight.

Until the Nineties, the main job of a revise editor was checking that reports conformed to the newspaper's style. One of the main jobs

### PAPER ROUND

Brian MacArthur



now is correcting grammar — which is also the main area of complaint in letters from readers to the Editor. "Many skilled journalists who left school in the Eighties and Nineties have simply not been taught grammar; they have never heard of the unrelated participle," says Austin.

Style matters, because it defines a newspaper's character. I still blush at my worst howler on *The Times*, when I reported a conference at "Christ Church College, Oxford". As our style book warns (sorry, gives warning), it is, of course, Christ Church. I was rebuked by a distinguished public school headmaster, who added witheringly that he had imagined that even if I did not know the correct title, the sub-editors would have put me right.

I spent a lot of time in those days with headmasters. They were always quick to detect lapses of style or grammar — another of mine was the use of "all-of" instead of all, which now appears daily in one newspaper or another. So I received an early lesson in how upset readers can become when journalists do not

know the basic rules of grammar or are ignorant of styles of title in the Armed Forces, the Churches or the Courts, especially if they are soldiers, clergymen or lawyers — so upset that they may cancel their subscriptions.

The style book makes fascinating reading. Take the world's most famous woman. She is Diana, Princess of Wales, at first mention, subsequently the Princess (with a capital, as she still remains a member of the Royal Family) and never Princess Diana or — even worse — Princess Di (except in reported speech). The Duchess of York, however, has capitals at first mention but is demoted subsequently to the duchess (lower case) because she is no longer a member of the Royal Family (always upper case).

Until only recently *The Times* tried to avoid the use of capital letters. It was prime minister, not Prime Minister. Capitals are "now back in fashion: 'The proper names of people and places, formal titles or titles of important offices, and the names of well-known and substantial institutions, all require capitals.'"

Among the clichés that are to be resisted strongly are: backlash, brainchild, consensus, dramatic, legendary, mega, prestigious, shambles and traumatic. Joining hyphens are rarely needed when adverbs are used to qualify adjectives. So it is heavily pregnant or colourfully decorated — unless the compound looks better with the hyphen, in which case it can be well-founded or ill-educated.

There is guidance on participles, particularly when they are unrelated. "Judging by the lingering camera shots, Jack's luck was not about to change" is wrong — judging requires a following noun or pronoun in agreement: "Judging by the lingering camera shots, I saw that Jack's luck..."

At this newspaper, the week ends on Saturday night: crash, shock and slam are to be avoided in headlines but bid (for attempt), crisis, hit (adversely affect) and row (clash or dispute) are OK (not okay) if they are not overworked; farther is applied only to distance; emphasise is preferred to stress; and almost every surname (except for convicted offenders, the dead and cases where common usage omits a title, mostly in arts and sport) should be granted the courtesy of a title, with Ms fully acceptable.

Maintaining style is obviously important, but it should not be a straitjacket and should not destroy the style of the best writers and columnists. Sub-editors do not tamper with the prose of Bernard Levin, Simon Jenkins or Matthew Parris or, of course, the Editor (always caps).

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# THE TIMES

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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 20 1997

## US and German rates pause soothes foreign exchanges



Greenspan: convincing case

By GRAHAM SHARJEANT  
FINANCIAL EDITOR

LINGERING fears of another quick bout of currency instability on the foreign exchanges were soothed yesterday when Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, and Hans Tietmeyer, President of the Bundesbank, convinced colleagues yet again that interest rates should not be changed.

Shares bounced back on London and continued to recover in New York. Weekend worries about asset prices were again banished to the sidelines.

In London, the FTSE 100 index of blue chips gained 79.2 points or 1.7 per cent to 4,914.2, retrieving almost half the losses of Friday and Monday. On the Continent, the Eurotrak 100 index gained 1.9 per cent.

Second-line UK stocks, which missed most of this year's boom but also the weekend upsurge, again missed out on the euphoria, edging up 0.5 per cent. The FTSE 250 index gained 17.2 points to 4,680.8.

In New York, a volatile Dow Jones industrial average was up 63 points at midday to 7,866, retrieving

two thirds of Friday's losses in this week's two trading days.

In Hong Kong, which was closed on Monday, prices fell sharply, partly in response to a rise in interbank interest rates to resist an attack on the Hong Kong dollar. The Hang Seng index lost 3.8 per cent, or 619.62 points, to close at 15,477.26. The Manila stock exchange was closed by monsoon floods.

Speculation had mounted last week that the Bundesbank might allow its repo rate, at which it gives credit to banks, to rise above the 3 per cent maintained for the past

year. This became less likely as a series of interviews by members of the Bundesbank Council expressing their worries over the falling mark managed to talk it up. On Monday, another council member sought to prepare markets for a further standstill by saying that any rise in interest rates would damage Germany's domestic economy, a view echoed yesterday by OECD, the Paris-based agency, which said the mark's fall should last.

The dollar climbed back further against the mark on the foreign exchanges, again attaining DM1.84.

Sterling made a more modest gain of 1.4 pence to DM2.9487, but edged down against the dollar. The sterling index rose from 102.3 to 102.6 on the day.

Few would have contemplated a change in the Fed's stance this month were it not for the fears stirred on Friday. Although much-quoted official statistics of productivity growth remain low, the economy continues to expand with no sign of rising inflation or wage growth. The Fed has not changed rates since March and will not meet again until September 30.

### BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES	
FTSE 100	4914.2 (+79.2)
FTSE All Share	2217.23 (+30.46)
Nikkei	18661.00 (+80.10)
New York	7868.54 (+63.18)
Dow Jones	821.58 (+9.08)
S&P Composite	
US RATE	
Federal Funds	5.75% (5.75%)
Long Bond	6.87% (6.87%)
Yield	6.61% (6.62%)
LONDON MONEY	
3-month Interbank	7.75% (7.75%)
Libor long gdt	
future (Sep)	115.00 (115.00)
STERLING	
New York	1.8025 (1.8041)
London	
\$	1.8082 (1.8109)
DM	2.9486 (2.9558)
FF	6.0256 (6.0303)
SP	2.4320 (2.4330)
Yen	189.34 (189.58)
S index	102.6 (102.3)
DOLLAR	
London	
DM	1.8410 (1.8547)
FF	6.1950 (6.1835)
SP	1.5150 (1.5178)
Yen	118.30 (118.07)
S index	106.1 (106.5)
Tokyo close Yen	117.84
NORTH SEA OIL	
Brut 15-day (Nov)	\$19.20 (\$19.00)
GOLD	
London close	\$322.85 (\$322.85)
* denotes midday trading price	

## US cosmetics queen eyes Laura Ashley

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM, RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

AS ANN IVERSON, Laura Ashley chief executive, insisted last night that she has no intention of resigning, another feisty American admitted she was considering a bid for the company.

Georgette Mosbacher, a successful cosmetics entrepreneur who tried to buy Laura Ashley two years ago, said: "I still very much like the company." Asked whether she might make an offer, she said: "It is possible."

Yesterday the company revealed worse than expected losses and plans to close two of its factories in Wales. The £1 million-a-year Mrs Iverson acknowledged that the company will make no profit this year, and she is being forced to abandon expansion plans in the United States. "I have not considered leaving and have the full support of the board and major shareholders," she said. "Pressure is to be expected. We need to get it right."

With the company's fortunes at such a low ebb, there is some speculation that a bidder could come forward and Georgette Mosbacher is a favourite contender. The wife of Bob Mosbacher, former US Commerce Secretary, she bought and successfully

turned round the La Prairie cosmetics company. Her interest in Laura Ashley stems from a belief that she could effect a similar turnaround there and two years ago she tried to persuade Sir Bernard Ashley to sell his shares to her.

Although he refused then, she has kept a careful watch on the company ever since. The latest news is likely to persuade her to renew her takeover efforts, although last night she said she had yet to make another approach.

Laura Ashley, one of the largest employers in rural Wales, will make up to 190 workers redundant with the closure of two of its garment factories in Carmarthen and Machynlleth. The work will be transferred to lower-cost factories abroad.

News of the closures caused a storm of local protest. Llysoch Cymru, Liberal Democrat MP for Machynlleth, said he would be seeking a meeting with Mrs Iverson. "I shall be asking the chief executive if Montgomeryshire people are paying the price for the company's mistakes on overstocking," he said.

The company's four other Welsh factories, employing 577 staff, remain under re-

view, Mrs Iverson said. Sir Bernard, the co-founder, owner of a third of the stock and a non-executive director, has protected the factories in the past but went along with the board decision on closures.

The Welsh shutdowns will cost the company £1 million, contributing, along with a further £900,000 to cover overstocking, to a first-half pre-tax loss of £4.5 million. Although it expects to see a profit in the second half, the result for the whole year will be "approximately breakeven". Second-half earnings will be hit by the return to full-price sales after weeks of heavy discounting.

Mrs Iverson said that the company will open five stores in the US in the second half, as expected, but will open no stores there next year. It had expected to add 10 stores to its US chain in 1998. Instead it will spend £2 million on a US advertising campaign.

Group like-for-like sales in the first half were up 5 per cent. In the UK, they were 11 per cent ahead, in North America up 4 per cent, and on mainland Europe they fell 9 per cent. The gross margin fell from 48.4 to 40.5 per cent.



Greg Hutchings, chairman of Tomkins, still retains share options in the company valued at £1.7 million

## Hutchings pay package tops £2m

By JASON NISSE

GREG HUTCHINGS, chairman of Tomkins, the bread, guns and bicycles group, picked up £2.09 million in pay, bonus and exercised share options last year.

Mr Hutchings received a 21 per cent increase in his salary package to £1.36 million, the first increase since 1993. In addition he cashed in share

options creating a profit of £750,000 and retains share options, valued in the group's accounts at £1.7 million.

Ian Duncan, finance director, was awarded a 48 per cent increase in pay and bonus to £912,000. Bob Muddimer, deputy chairman, nearly doubled his pay package to £605,000.

The packages are determined by the remuneration committee — which includes

Charles Gates, who is paid a £250,000 (£155,000) a year consultancy by Tomkins.

Another company unloved by the City, Matthew Clark, revealed 50 per cent pay rises for its three senior directors. The troubled cider maker increased the basic pay of Peter Aikens, chief executive, from £151,000 to £230,000 while two other directors, Hugh Etheridge and Peter

Huntley, saw their salaries rise from £87,000 to £130,000. None of them received bonus payments, which meant their total packages fell.

The salary increases were agreed in May last year, four months before the company revealed that it was facing problems caused by the competition from alcopops.

City Diary, page 27

### Exchange was 'ready to censure Anite'

A SECOND Stock Exchange inquiry into Anite, the computer networks group, has found that the former market high-flyer withheld important information about a misleading profits announcement (Paul Durman writes).

It is understood that the exchange would have been ready to publicly censure Anite were it not for the departures of Roger Holland, Jon Richards and Jeff Harrison — respectively its former chairman, chief executive and finance director.

Mr Holland has taken control of Case Technology, previously an Anite loss-maker, and is a Tomkins director.

## Granada buyout at knock-down price

By DOMINIC WALSH

GRANADA, the media and leisure combine, is poised to sell its consumer services division to a management buyout team backed by venture capital.

A confidential memorandum, circulated to senior executives, suggests the deal will be completed in September. Analysts believe that the business, built up in the 1980s through a string of acquisitions totalling more than £200 million, could fetch no more than £80 million.

Granada's interim results in June were hit by a £167 million goodwill writedown against the value of the business, which made a profit in the half year of £4.7 million. It provides emergency services and has maintenance contracts with companies such as British Aerospace. The disposal is the latest in a series of non-

core asset disposals in the wake of Granada's acquisition of the Forte hotel and catering empire. So far it has recouped more than £1.3 billion of the £3.9 billion purchase price.

It is understood that negotiations are continuing over a £350 million-plus deal to sell Grovenor House Hotel, Forte's flagship in London's Park Lane. The hotel formed part of the Exclusive Hotels package put up for sale last year, but was taken off the market six months ago.

The prospective purchaser is a consortium of Middle Eastern investors linked to the kingdom of Qatar's ruling Althani family.

A deal whereby Ritz Carlton, the US hotel group, would have managed the property appears to have fallen through.

## Long-distance operators in line for US phone win

By ERIC REGULY

AMERICAN regulators were expected last night to hand a victory to the long-distance phone companies by rejecting a regional phone company bid to compete in their markets.

The ruling is crucial to the fortunes of MCI, the long-distance operator that is to be bought by British Telecom in the autumn for about £14 billion. MCI has been complaining since last year that the regional phone companies are unfairly resisting its efforts to compete in the local markets, an area in which it wants to expand.

MCI's mounting losses in the local market triggered a surprise profits warning last month that sent BT's share price plummeting.

The Federal Communications Commission, the top

telecoms regulator, was expected to reject an application from Ameritech, the regional phone company, to enter the \$80 billion (£50 billion) long-distance market because it has not opened up its own markets sufficiently to new competitors, including MCI and AT&T. The 1996 Telecommunications Act gave local and regional operators the right to offer long-distance service as long as the long-distance operators were free to compete in their own markets.

Bert Roberts, MCI's chairman, accuses Ameritech of using blocking techniques to ensure its local monopolies remain intact. He said Ameritech and the other regional operators still control 99 per cent of their markets in spite of a \$2 billion spend by MCI to

build local infrastructure. In June, the FCC rejected a bid by SBC Communications regional phone company to offer long-distance service because it failed to meet requirements.

BT wants to reduce the price it is paying for MCI because its losses in the local market will be higher than expected. However, MCI is indicating there is no room to renegotiate. BT fears that institutions will demand the resignations of Sir Iain Vallance, chairman, and Sir Peter Bonfield, chief executive, if the price is unchanged.

If the merger is completed, BT probably will attempt to reduce MCI's losses by cutting local market investment. BT's strategy will be unveiled this month when it completes a review of the merger.

## Break for the Border breaks from music

By DOMINIC WALSH

BREAK FOR THE BORDER, the themed restaurant operator, has put a "for sale" sign over its music and theatre interests, comprising the Shepherd's Bush Empire and Drifton Academy in London, Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, and the Birmingham Empire.

The group announced yesterday that Ian Howard, group chief executive and one of the company's founders, was stepping down to pursue a buyout of the majority of the division although further offers are

still being canvassed. Mr Howard, who will remain a non-executive director, has already submitted an indicative offer for the three music venues but is not interested in the Gaiety Theatre. Analysts estimate that the business as a whole could fetch between £7 million and £10 million.

Roger Beaumont, who is stepping up from operations director to become group managing director, said the move would enable the company to focus on its most profitable restaurants. "These venues take up an inordinate amount of cash and I didn't

see how they fitted with our restaurants and bars," he said. "Too many companies try to chase too many rainbows. We should be concentrating on the core business."

The emphasis will be on developing Break for the Border, a Tex-Mex concept with two outlets in London and one in Dublin. The next is due to open in Leeds in January and further sites are in the pipeline.

Of the company's other units, Café de Seine in Dublin may also be expanded but assets such as the Grafton Plaza Hotel in Dublin are

unlikely to be retained in the long term. An offer has in fact already been received for Lawson Beaumont, the outside events business acquired for £1.8 million in 1995.

One analyst said that the decision to sell the music venues was long overdue. He said: "This company has shown a complete lack of strategy when it should have been concentrating on the core Break for the Border concept."

Break for the Border shares were unchanged at 49p yesterday, against a 12-month high of 68p.

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TIM 20/08/97



# Firms fear tax-linked leap in electricity prices

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY  
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

BUSINESSES are facing big rises in electricity prices in what they fear is a move by the electricity industry to recoup the windfall tax and bolster margins ahead of a new regulatory price control.

Large customers report unprecedented price increases of up to 30 per cent on the generation part of their electricity bills in new contracts under negotiation.

Generation charges are unregulated and make up about half of a bill, while other

components — such as transmission and distribution — are regulated. Business and industrial customers spend about £1 million a factory or about £50,000 a retail outlet each year on electricity.

The price rises have important implications for the wholesale price of electricity and contradict forecasts from the electricity regulator that generation costs will fall by between 4 and 12 per cent in the wholesale market.

Bob Spears, of the Utility Buyers Forum, said: "These increases are unjustifiable. We are seeing rises far above RPI for which there should be no cause." Companies in the forum

believe that the electricity companies are cranking up prices to rake back some of the windfall tax.

Utility companies gave warning ahead of the £5.2 billion windfall tax that it would lead to increased prices. However, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, said that the companies would be able to absorb the tax. Domestic customers are — until the next price reviews — protected from price jumps by regulation, but business is not.

Don McGarrigle, an energy adviser who works for several large companies, said: "The rises are staggering. With increases between 10 and 20 per cent, there is a strong belief that they

are trying to pass on the windfall tax and guarding against the supply price review."

A spokeswoman for the Electricity Association, the trade body, said that it had no details on the current round of contract talks, which were private between suppliers and customers.

Stephen Littlechild, the industry watchdog, will today set out the last discussion paper in the supply price review, which — he intends — will cut domestic electricity prices by £30 a year. Plans unveiled so far have increased regional electricity companies, some of which are threatening to go to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

## Virgin and Nomura consider rail sales

By FRASER NELSON

RICHARD BRANSON and Nomura Bank are set to become two of the last beneficiaries of the privatisation of British Rail through selling interests in their respective train companies next year.

Virgin Trains, which runs Cross Country and West Coast Trains franchises, has appointed Merrill Lynch to look at a £250 million flotation about next spring. Nomura, the Japanese bank, is considering an £800 million sale of Angel Trains, which it bought from the Government for £672 million in a deal with the management three years ago.

Both deals would make millions for their owners, and will be held as further evidence that the Government short-changed the taxpayer through enthusiasm to release the system to the private sector.

The two companies are already working closely together in the run-up to the £2.25 billion refurbishment on Vir-

gin's two franchises, which was agreed by the Franchising Director, who in return gave Virgin a £1 billion subsidy over 15 years.

Virgin is currently using Angel's procurement specialists to advise it on the type of trains to replace its ageing fleet of 120 trains. On Friday week, it will invite the three rolling stock companies — including Angel — to bid for the £750 million contract, which it will put out to tender.

The relationship prompted speculation in the City that the two companies might agree a merger and follow the example set when Stagecoach bought the Porterbrook leasing company last year.

One analyst said: "The story of Virgin Trains over the next few years is one of a massive engineering project — one which will probably be the largest in the UK. Angel is basically a glorified rent collector, which is making an unbelievable amount of money from basically over-charging the rail companies. It would make a lot of sense for the two to get together — and Virgin has done stranger things than that in the past."

Will Whitehorn, managing director of Virgin Trains said a flotation was "more likely than not".

Angel Trains, the largest of the three leasing companies, last year made a profit of £131.5 million on sales of £291.3 million.

It has a complicated ownership structure that obscures the directors' interests. John Prida, the former head of InterCity and Angel's non-executive chairman, owns the majority of the 5 per cent share between management and staff. This would give him a £40 million holding, and if the £800 million float goes ahead, a £7 million profit.

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## NHS staff backed on pensions mis-selling

By CAROLINE MERRELL  
AND ANNE ASHWORTH

ALAN MILBURN, the Health Minister, is urging insurance companies involved in the pensions mis-selling scandal to speed up the reinstatement process. Mr Milburn said that National Health Service workers were the biggest category of employees affected by the scandal, in which life insurance salesmen encouraged thousands of people to give up employers' pension plans in favour of less beneficial personal pensions.

Mr Milburn believes that up to 30,000 NHS staff may be affected, yet only 200 staff have so far been reinstated. He has asked Alec Cowan, the NHS pensions agency chief executive, to take all action possible on behalf of employees. However, Mr Milburn said: "The onus clearly lies with the industry to speed things up."

Earlier this month, Prudential, the UK's biggest insurance company, said that it had doubled its provision against pensions mis-selling to £450 million. Measures to speed up the review process contributed to the provision increase. The Prudential will be offering 50,000 mis-selling victims a scheme guaranteeing that they will be no worse off in retirement. Many of the Prudential's cases include public-sector workers. Legal & General also offers a similar scheme.

Early retirement and high levels of redundancies among older workers are fuelling the pension crisis, according to an organisation campaigning for the rights of the over-50s.

The Carnegie Third Age Programme has urged the Government to encourage older people to stay in employment and to demonstrate to companies the benefits of a mixed-age workforce. Third Age argues that the exclusion of over-50s from employment is reducing the fund for state pensions and increasing the burden on taxpayers. There are 2.8 million over-50s who are registered unemployed or "economically inactive".



Marlene Dietrich starring in *The Blue Angel*, featured in the Rohauer collection



Buster Keaton playing the starring role in *The General*



Olivier: *Fire over England*



WC Fields in a typical pose

## Carlton acquires collection of classic early films

By ERIC REGULY

CARLTON Communications has acquired the Rohauer Film Collection, a library of classic movies that was almost bequeathed to two cats in the late 1980s.

The Rohauer collection comprises more than 600 films from cinema's early years, including works by Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and WC Fields. Keaton's *The General* is considered one of the funniest films ever made. Other titles in the collection include *The Phantom of the Opera* with Lon Chaney, *The Thief of Bagdad* with Douglas Fairbanks and Marlene Dietrich's *The Blue Angel*.

The portfolio also contains many films from the golden age of British cinema — Laurence Olivier's *Fire over England* and *Four Men in a Boat*, Michael Caine's first film, are among them.

Carlton would not reveal the purchase price, though it is known to be less than £10 million. Many of the films are rarely shown and some are faded and ripped, requiring extensive restoration. The collection will be offered to other broadcasters and will be featured on Carlton Films, the new digital terrestrial TV channel to be launched with Granada next year.

The Rohauer collection was assembled by Raymond Rohauer, the eccentric former film curator of New York's Gallery of Modern Art. He died in 1987 and left much of his wealth to Dusty and Satch, his two cats. The film collection was bequeathed and was put into a foundation, that later landed at Douris Corp, an American media company.

CTE, Carlton's programme distribution arm, bought the films' British rights in perpetuity from Douris. It also obtained their worldwide distribution rights, excluding North America, for eight years.

CTE's library now contains 8,000 hours of TV programmes, including more than 1,500 films. Earlier this year Carlton bought Rank's film library. It also owns the Romulus and Korda British film libraries.

## BA-American link 'merger from hell'

By JON ASHWORTH

THE proposed link-up between British Airways and American Airlines is a "merger from hell" that will lead to higher fares and falling standards, a group of visiting US congressmen heard yesterday.

Richard Branson, chairman of Virgin Atlantic, BA's arch-rival, said that the two airlines were far too big to get together, adding: "Fares will go up and the quality of service will go down."

Bob Ayling, the BA chief executive, said he was "fairly confident" fares would not rise. Mr Ayling said: "Virgin wants to maintain its cosy position at Heathrow with

access denied to airlines such as Continental, US Airways, Delta, TWA and Northwest. The entry of these airlines will see an inevitable fall in air fares from Heathrow to the US as competition for business increases, but it appears that Virgin is afraid of increased competition."

Mr Ayling and Mr Branson were appearing before the US House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which was in the UK on a fact-finding mission. Approval for the alliance is conditional on a new open skies treaty between the UK and America.

## Improving car margins help Perry Group

By CAROLINE MERRELL

PERRY GROUP, the accident repair and motor retailer, revealed a 19 per cent increase to £4.9 million in interim pre-tax profits yesterday, on the back of improving margins for new and second-hand cars (Mark Court writes).

Turnover at its Nationwide Crash Repair Centres rose 24 per cent to £26 million. Richard Allan, the chairman and chief executive, is aiming for an 8 per cent net margin from the crash repair business, which is growing rapidly. "We are going to look at expansion into Europe," he said.

An interim dividend of 3.45p will be paid on 1 December, up 6 per cent from 3.25p.

## Customers wasting money in accounts

By CAROLINE MERRELL

BANK and building society customers waste £130 million a year keeping their money in current accounts that do not pay interest, Abbey National has claimed.

Around a quarter of the UK's current account customers, a total of 61 million accounts, hold their cash in non-interest accounts, according to Abbey's annual banking survey.

Even those who do manage to earn interest on their current accounts are dissatisfied with the rates offered — 31 per cent (£2.5 million accounts) wanted higher interest.

In general, bank and build-

ing society customers were unhappy with the way they are treated — 41 per cent claimed shoddy service, while one in three was unhappy with the charges levied.

In spite of the high levels of dissatisfaction, more than half, 55 per cent, said that they would not move their accounts because they felt that it would be problematic.

However, the survey claims that two million people would seriously consider changing their account. Incentives to switch include free overdrafts, interest loyalty bonuses and ability to use branches other than their own.

## BUSINESS ROUNDUP

### Collapse of Hamlet puts 150 jobs at risk

ABOUT 150 jobs were under threat after Hamlet Group, the clothes importer, went into administration with debts of £40 million. Chris Hughes and Chris Barlow, joint administrators, of Coopers & Lybrand, said the company had collapsed because of "management problems" and because it had overstretched itself financially. Dealing in shares in Hamlet Group, based in Whitechapel, East London, were suspended last week at 22.45p, valuing the company at £6.7 million.

The administration order covers three companies: Hamlet Group, Hamlet International and Jeffrey Rogers (Imports). Hamlet Group trade names include Nougat, Dare to Bare and Barnaby. "We are actively completing a review of the business which is trading as normal," said Mr Hughes. "We have already had several expressions of interest for various parts of the group, and we will be looking to progress these interests to the best effect for creditors and shareholders."

### Kvaerner disappoints

SHARES in Kvaerner, the Anglo-Norwegian engineering and shipping group that took over Trafalgar House last year, fell 25 Norwegian crowns to 433 crowns yesterday after the group reported a rise in first-half operating profits from 520 million crowns to 690 million crowns (£56.1 million). Analysts who had expected 1.2 billion crowns of operating profit said the figures were extremely bad, adding that the pre-tax profit margin was less than 1 per cent. Kvaerner raised the target for disposals from 10 billion to 15 billion crowns. It said that the Cunard cruise line was still suffering losses.

### Ben Bailey to expand

BEN BAILEY, the Yorkshire housebuilder, intends to develop and expand its product range to take advantage of improved conditions in the housing market. Yesterday the company reported a rise in pre-tax profits to £462,000 from £116,000 in the six months to June 30. Earnings increased to 3.01p a share from 0.75p and the interim dividend, due on September 26, is doubled to 0.6p a share. The company said it sold 154 houses in the first half, up from 127, at an average price of £870,000, up from £80,000 in the first half of the previous year.

### Defence deal for GPT

GPT, the telecommunications group, has won a Ministry of Defence service contract worth more than £100 million, creating up to 100 jobs. The company's Strategic Communications Systems division, based in Coventry, will support part of the MoD's new UK fixed telephone system. It will be responsible for maintaining the RAE's secure integrated communications network known as Uniter. GPT will provide about 200 maintenance and operations staff across the country. The new jobs come after the announcement by GPT of an extra 400 jobs in June in Liverpool, Nottingham, Coventry and Poole.

### Ilion sales up by £23m

ILION, the computer distribution group previously known as Persona, raised pre-tax profits from £27 million to £44 million in the six months to end June, on sales up from £65 million to £88 million. In spite of the effects of the strong pound on sales and profits, the shares slipped 2½p to 388½p but remain near their all-time high of 407½p. The half-year dividend rises from 1.7p to 2.0p out of earnings up from 9.0p to 11.0p. The group says that it now distributes the world's top five networking products across six European countries.

### Bright outlook at Emess

EMESS, the international lighting group, lifted pre-tax profits to £2.8 million from £2.4 million in the six months to June, in spite of being hit by the strength of sterling. Operating profits in consumer lighting jumped 32 per cent, but those in the commercial division fell 11 per cent, as sales slid 4 per cent. Earnings per share rose to 0.8p from a restated 0.7p, but, as with last year, no interim dividend is being paid. The shares rose 4p to 21½p. Emess expects a gradual recovery in its commercial lighting business.

### Brandon Hire slips

BRANDON HIRE, the tool, catering equipment and furniture hire company, reported a modest decline in pre-tax profits to £895,000 (£901,000) in the six months to June 30, in spite of a rise in operating profits to £1.3 million from £1.1 million. Earnings were unchanged at 2.9p a share. The firm expects a substantially stronger second half as its recent sale of access equipment to Kestral Powered Access allows it to focus on the core tool hire business. The interim dividend, to be paid on October 17, has been lifted to 1.7p a share from 0.9p.

### Limit's underwriter stake

LIMIT, the largest corporate vehicle investing in the Lloyd's of London insurance market, is taking a stake in the tiny underwriter C1 de Rougemont. Alongside Riverside, a private investment group that is buying a 15 per cent stake, Limit is taking 10 per cent. Both have pledged to supply capital to de Rougemont's two syndicates, non-marine 732 and marine 112, on a long-term basis. Limit already controls the bigger Janson Green and Bankside underwriting agencies.

### Creighton's losses £3.3m

CREIGHTON'S NATURALLY, the troubled manufacturer of toiletries, soaps and fragrances, had a pre-tax loss of £3.3 million for the year to March 31, compared with a £470,000 profit in the previous 12 months. There was an operating loss of just under £3 million and a £399,000 writedown of an investment. Losses of 33.9p a share compared with earnings of 5.3p previously. The company, which paid no interim dividend, is also passing payment of a final dividend. In the previous year there was a total dividend of 3.2p.

## US shoe group likely to bid for Sears shops



David Spitz and the Nine West group aim to expand in shoe retailing in the UK

NINE WEST, the American shoe group that last week bought 60 department store concessions from Sears's British Shoe Corporation, is likely to emerge as a bidder for part of the high street retailing business that BSC is set to put out to tender.

David Spitz, chairman of Shoe Studio Group, the British arm of Nine West, yesterday said: "We will be very interested in seeing the tender document."

The American group would act alone, rather than with a partner in buying any of BSC, he said. If it were to buy any shops, it would replace them

with branches of its Bertie, Nine West, Pied à Terre, Enzo Angiolini or CK chains.

Nine West, which is opening some of its own stores in the UK, has big ambitions to expand in Britain. Its purchase from BSC last week makes it the biggest department store shoe concession operator in Britain, with more than 150 outlets. Its remaining competitors are Carvela-Kurt Geiger and Bally. Mr Spitz said that he was not aware of any other possible acquisitions in the UK beyond BSC.

JP Morgan, the merchant bank, is drawing up a range of tender documents for BSC.

They will go out next month to companies that have shown interest in BSC's four chains — Dolcis, Cable & Co. Shoe City and Shoe Express — and its remaining department store concessions.

After seeing the response, David James, the company director brought in earlier this year to sort out BSC, is expected to make his recommendations to the Sears board next month or in October.

A number of other shoe companies are known to be interested in acquiring parts of BSC, but analysts believe that they will all be looking to buy at bargain prices.

Bank	Buyer	Bank	Seller
Australia	2.25	Bank	2.10
Austria	21.75	Bank	20.00
Belgium	33.51	Bank	56.95
Canada	2.50	Bank	2.175
Cyprus	0.30	Bank	0.055
Denmark	11.50	Bank	10.31
Finland	9.35	Bank	8.50
France	10.35	Bank	9.85
Germany	8.11	Bank	2.67
Greece	1.18	Bank	4.48
Hong Kong	12.00	Bank	12.00
Ireland	1.18	Bank	1.07
Italy	1.18	Bank	1.07
Japan	305.00	Bank	187.50
Netherlands	0.22	Bank	0.015
New Zealand	3.33	Bank	3.25
Norway	2.25	Bank	2.45
Portugal	311.00	Bank	288.00
Spain	8.26	Bank	7.50
Sweden	280.00	Bank	241.50
Switzerland	12.75	Bank	12.55
Turkey	22.00	Bank	25.00
USA	1.75	Bank	1.50

Notes for small denomination bank notes supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to foreign cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.



# Repeat pattern at Laura Ashley?



COMMENTARY  
by our City Editor

Somewhere between the 1996 and 1997 Laura Ashley annual reports, Sir Bernard Ashley dropped his title as honorary life president. Whether this was down to oversight, discretion on his part or wishful thinking on the part of the company's executives, it was not an indication of the irascible Sir Bernard's lessening involvement.

Never mind what interest he may have in preserving the legacy of his late wife's designs, Sir Bernard has around 24 million Laura Ashley shares, and there are another 20 million in family trusts. That holding, totalling up to around 35 per cent, has ensured that he keeps a close watch on the company, and particularly its share price, and not always from a distance. When his status as a tax exile allows, Sir Bernard makes his presence felt at Laura Ashley headquarters, as he has been doing recently.

So when the board declares its unanimous support for the chief executive, as it did yesterday, along with a warning of half-year losses of £4.5 million, Ann Iverson would be well advised not to take the sentiment too seriously. Sir Bernard was the decisive influence behind the appointment and then the departure of her last two predecessors, one of them another American with an impressive line in marketing jargon that somehow failed to translate to the bottom line.

Why a high-flying Goldman Sachs partner, John Thornton, would bother himself with taking on the chairmanship of a company in the LA league would be inexplicable, were it not for the fact that he was a trusted confidant of Sir Bernard.

That relationship must now be feeling the stress, since Sir Bernard's shares are now priced at just 55p. It is worth recalling that they were priced at 135p when the company floated in 1985 and Sir Bernard clearly believes that they should be a great deal higher than that.

This is the implication of a deal he entered into with a former LA chairman, Hugh Blakeway Webb, another of his place men until he fell dramatically from favour. A private deal between Sir Bernard and Mr Blakeway Webb required Sir B to buy Mr Blakeway Webb's shares should he leave the company. The price was a hefty £2 apiece, and it is a safe bet that, two years on from having to part with £8 million, Sir Bernard is still smarting.

Those close to him suggest that he would happily bail out of his stake, but not at this level. The fact that he has now countermanded the closure of two factories, a previously unthinkable

move, indicates that he may be beginning to recognise the scale of the company's problems.

But if John Thornton is a true friend, he may have to counsel Sir Bernard to lower his expectations. If George Mosbacher still believes that she can turn Laura Ashley into a truly international brand, then shareholders should encourage her to have a go, and hand over their stock before the price falls further.

## A very private entrepreneur

Will Whitehorn, factotum of Richard Branson's Virgin empire, has been engaged in one of the more subtle arts of City spin-doctoring: floating the idea of a flotation. Virgin Rail, franchisee of North West Main Line and the Midlands cross-country network, might raise money for some £800

million of investment in a deal that, according to unnamed City experts, might value Virgin Rail at about £250 million. Among many other things, it is not clear whether this would include Mr Branson's stake in EuroRail, the property group and would-be cross-channel railway company.

The boss himself played cautious statesman yesterday, insisting the matter was merely "under discussion". Unless Virgin is really stumped for finance, it should go no further than that.

Mr Branson is a brilliant, if erratic, entrepreneur in the old mode. Recognising that, he made one of his best decisions when he realised that floating Virgin Group had been a mistake and took it private again in 1988. The City likes winners, but in the long run does not appreciate strong-willed mavericks. Still less did Mr Branson care for the City's favourite suit, Others of like stamp, such as Alan Sugar and more recently Anita and

Gordon Roddick, have envied his timely move.

Private ownership allows the confident to back their hunches and take risks, so long as they keep their creditors on board. You can also change tack, as Mr Branson has frequently done, without being answerable to outside shareholders who suddenly find that their investment has changed beyond recognition.

Certainly, Mr Branson's empire has changed fundamentally since 1988. It is not just that transport and consumer products have displaced entertainment. The core business of Virgin is now to maintain and promote its own brand name. This is its biggest asset. It is applied to cola, pensions and, with less obvious success, to wedding dresses.

These businesses are discrete. Many rely on individual partners with the industrial expertise, deeper pockets or preferably both. But the owner of the name must remain in control to guard

his valuable franchise, creating a built-in conflict with potential third-party investors in one bit or another. Only lack of would-be rail partners can explain Mr Branson toying with a flotation of this outpost of empire.

If he went ahead, an army of Branson fans would doubtless back it. But few would bet against them living to regret it.

## Watch where the money goes

Not all investment trusts are out of favour, despite the general malaise in the sector. Value and Income Trust remains at a premium to assets and yesterday it received a resounding vote of confidence from the City when its £15 million debenture issue found plenty of takers at a gross yield of just 7.73 per cent.

This, boasts Matthew Oakeshott, is the cheapest long-term money to be raised by an investment trust since Roy Jenkins was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr Oakeshott recalls that period fondly, having been an adviser to the said Chancellor. But now he and Angela Lascelles run OLIM, the fund

manager behind Value and Income. When the pair moved into VIT 11 years ago, it had assets of £7.5 million. After yesterday's issue, that figure has swelled to £100 million. So it may be worth taking note of where they intend to put the new money.

Most of it is headed towards the smaller companies which have not been beneficiaries of the stock market's bull run and should therefore avoid being the victims of the bears when they take over.

There is a growing enthusiasm for the second liners, both manufacturing and service companies. But VIT will also channel some of the new money into property, believing that while the institutions drive up the price of prime investments, there are less obviously attractive buildings which offer a generous return. The record suggests that OLIM's actions may be worth copying.

## Between friends

THOSE sound bureaucrats at the Paris-based OECD, doubtless fearing ostracism from the delights of polite official society, argue that it does not matter that Germany will fail the 3 per cent deficit test for joining the euro. Their forecast of 3 1/2 per cent for 1997 is, they say, "well within the range of normal statistical revision". Quite so. They omit to note that normal statistical revision could just as easily push the deficit over 3 1/2 per cent.

# Reform 'needed to cut German jobless rate'

By GRAHAM SEARJEANT, FINANCIAL EDITOR

UNEMPLOYMENT will remain at more than four million in Germany next year and is unlikely to fall fast unless many more structural reforms are made, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said in its annual report on the country.

The Paris-based economics agency projects that, after rising from 4 million to 4.3 million this year, unemployment will merely edge down to 4.2 million, or 10.9 per cent, in 1998. Recovery in the economy has been imbalanced, it says, leading initially to a fall in employment.

Growth is relying too much on exports outside Europe and the recent weakness of the mark. Fiscal measures to meet the Maastricht tests for economic and monetary union by the end of this year have left domestic demand flat.

Germany will still miss two of these targets on OECD projections, even though growth is expected to accelerate to 2 1/2 per cent this year and 2 3/4 per cent in 1998. But the OECD excuses these failures and argues that starting the euro on time is vital to long-term reform and new jobs.

It says the budget deficit will come down to 3 1/2 per cent this year and 2 1/2 per cent in 1998 before allowing for the net impact of tax cuts. But its economists maintain: "The difference from 3 per cent is well within the range of normal statistical revision so at this deficit level the criterion could be effectively regarded

as being met." Germany will also just break the rule that national debt must not be more than 60 per cent of national income, a test likely to be widely flouted by other countries.

The debt ratio is projected to rise again in 1998 to about 62 per cent. But the OECD says that this mainly because of unification.

The report chastises the German Government, and by implication even more the opposition, for delays in bringing forward cuts in taxes, state pensions and industrial subsidies, and in reforming the healthcare. It complains that Germany's economic debate focuses too much on fairness rather than the need for a dynamic response to a changing global and European economy and the "overwhelming requirement" to create jobs.

The economists criticise efforts to protect people from rapid change. The speed and impact of reforms has been "seriously impaired by generous transition arrangements".

Given sluggish domestic growth, there is no cause to tighten monetary policy. OECD economists concluded, commenting on the day the Bundesbank left its repo rates unchanged, making a full year at 3 per cent.

Should growth prove too sluggish to cut the budget deficit, they say it would be better to accelerate privatisation of state assets than to put on extra excise duties or other ad hoc taxes.

## Stoves sales boosted by windfalls

STOVES, Britain's only big independent cooker manufacturer, lifted pre-tax profits to £5.2 million, from £4.3 million, in the year to May 31, on turnover that rose to £80 million from £63 million (Chris Ayres writes).

The company said that sales were being boosted by building society windfall payouts.

Stoves also yesterday disclosed plans to export to Germany and America. It said that its European investments would be phased according to currency exchange rates, while deliveries to America would start next month.

Earnings per share fell slightly, from 14.2p to 13.9p. A final dividend of 3.8p will be paid on October 15, taking the total dividend to 5.8p, up 11.5 per cent.

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## New chief quits at Watmoughs

By MARK COURT

DECLAN MURPHY has resigned as chief executive of Watmoughs, the printer, just eight months into the job and four weeks away from the company's interim results.

His departure comes after mounting pressure from institutions, alarmed by a succession of profits warnings and a sharp fall in Watmoughs's shares since Mr Murphy took the helm.

Patrick Walker, chairman, who ran Watmoughs for 30 years, is restored as chief executive. Mr Murphy, 37, had a management style that won him few friends in the City. One broker said: "He was considered to be very arrogant and people didn't like him. Anyone taking over from Patrick was going to have a tough time, but he went the wrong way about it. He took the

attitude that he didn't need the City and that he could run the business as he saw fit."

Mr Murphy was on a one-year rolling contract and is likely to receive around £180,000 in compensation.

Watmoughs's shares rose 4 1/2 p to 30 1/2 p yesterday. They traded at 48 1/2 p in February.

One analyst commented: "The return of Patrick Walker will add a degree of stability to the business which should allow the share price to start recovering. Institutions are pleased to have him back."

The printing sector has suffered from overseas competition, high paper prices and low margins. Analysts expect pre-tax figures on September 17 to be as low as £6 million compared with £10.8 million last time.

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## Buoyant Pifco still on prowl

PIFCO HOLDINGS, the household appliance manufacturer whose takeover talks with Kenwood, its larger rival, fell through last month, said yesterday that it was looking for another acquisition (Chris Ayres writes).

The company reported a 23 per cent increase in profits to £3.8 million, from £3.12 million, for the year to the April 30.

Michael Webber, the chairman, said: "We're looking for acquisitions within the same industry which produce small household appliances. We have £7.5 million net cash so we are in a very good position."

Pifco will pay a final dividend of 3.5p (3.15p) on October 22, bringing the total dividend to 6p (5.45p).

## Millennium effect lifts computer pay at Parity

By CHRIS AYRES

THE WAGES of computer consultants rose by as much as 20 per cent last year, with some freelancers earning up to 30 per cent more than they could in a permanent position, according to Parity, a leading IT services provider.

Parity employs more than 3,500 permanent staff and has about 70,000 freelancers in Britain and Europe. Its share price surged yesterday by 39 1/2 p to 53 1/2 p.

Parity says the wage rises have been caused by the massive volume of work needed to solve the millennium problem, convert computers to recognise the euro currency, and set up complex intranet and Internet systems.

Paul Davies, Parity's chief executive, said: "Even if you take away the windfall of the millennium problem and EMU conversion, we have still have a lot of business associated with intranet and Internet systems. We have been especially active with consultancy. When people realise the cost of solving the millennium problem, they often decide to replace the system. If they're going to spend money, they may as well spend it wisely."

For the six months to June 30, pre-tax profits rose 32 per cent, from £4.3 million to £5.7 million, on turnover of £91 million, up 19.7 per cent from £76 million. Earnings per share rose 32 per cent, from 6.75p to 8.9p, and the interim dividend, due November 12, rose from 1.4p to 1.8p.

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Paul Davies, left, with David Firth, finance director

## B&J takes over rival cut-price retailer

By CHRIS AYRES

BROWN & JACKSON, the troubled cut-price retail group that owns Poundstretcher, is acquiring Your More Store, a rival discount chain, for £7.65 million.

Your More Store, with 127 outlets in Scotland and the North of England, is wholly owned by Pepkor, the South African retail group that is also the principal shareholder in Brown & Jackson.

Your More Store was founded by Johan Visser, the current chief executive of Brown & Jackson, in Scotland six years ago. In the year to June 30 it earned net profits of £757,000 on turnover of £34.7 million.

Brown & Jackson also disclosed a reduction in pre-tax losses to £2.7 million from £9 million in the year to June 30. Losses fell to 2.1p a share from 21 1/2 p. There is again no dividend.

Turnover rose 12 per cent from £167.4 million to £187.4 million, helping the company to report its first operating profits for five years of £500,000, compared with a loss of £3.1 million in the same period last year.

Despite the general upturn in consumer spending Brown & Jackson's like-for-like sales grew only 1 per cent. Mr Visser said: "The current boom is happening above where we operate. The people who are enjoying the boom through windfall payments are not in the lower income brackets, which make up most of our customers."

## Capital sues over 'conspiracy'

By DOMINIC WALSH

CAPITAL CORPORATION is suing a former director and two former employees for conspiracy to injure the group.

The company yesterday issued a writ against Kenneth Thompson, former chief executive, Des Pereira, who was company secretary, and Guy Hutchinson, former food and beverage manager, alleging that they leaked company papers to press to create "a false and misleading impression as to the true value of its

business and its operating controls". Mr Thompson denied the allegation: "None of us has released anything to anyone."

In the past few days, reports have alleged that Capital's directors removed a profits warning from a draft interim results announcement last September and that John Dunkley, the gaming director, tried to exercise share options just before the interim results were due.

It was also alleged that Alan Hearn, chief executive, and Garry Nesbitt, former chairman, failed to tell the board

that they had received an approach from Ogden, the US gaming group, offering to take over the running of its two London casinos, Crookfords and the Colony Club.

Although Capital has admitted to lax controls by previous management, it maintains the new controls put in place are among the best in the industry. The Gaming Board, the industry regulator, gave the company a clean bill of health after investigating those failings, though it admitted concern yesterday at the latest allegations.

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## Irish eyes on lucrative UK food market

Eileen McCabe on the expansionist aims of the Republic's recently created Avonmore Waterford dairy co-operative

A recent business conference in Dublin, Pat O'Neill, chief executive of Avonmore Foods, shared the platform with several high-flyers from the world of computer technology, and a government minister.

After listening to a few self-congratulatory speeches about how the Irish Republic is embracing the world of information technology and benefiting from the apparent largesse of the big global players in the industry, Mr O'Neill delivered a few home truths. Big multinational firms are all very well, he said, but don't lose sight of what is happening in indigenous industries. Look at the strides they have made in finding export markets for their products, the major job expansion and remember that, for the most part, these companies do not get government assistance. They are Irish-owned and are here to stay.

After 25 years in the Irish food industry, Mr O'Neill knows a thing or two about staying power—and most of the audience had to

concede that just weeks after steering through the biggest corporate merger in the Republic's history, a deal that creates the world's fourth-biggest dairy processing company, they were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt on the issue of Irish companies on the world stage.

Now at the helm of the merged Avonmore Waterford Group (AWG), Mr O'Neill, 59, has postponed his retirement until 1999 because of the merger. He said: "I was going to leave at 60, but I have been asked to stay and I want to see this through."

Mr O'Neill joined the Kilkenny-based group in 1973, shortly after the region's loose confederation of more than 20 co-operative societies merged to become Avonmore co-op. After a decade of rapid growth spurred by the common agricultural

policy, the organisation was forced to make serious cutbacks when quotas were introduced in 1984. Three years later, the co-op's farmers decided the best way to fund expansion was a stock market flotation. A second rights issue in 1991 reduced the co-op stake in Avonmore Foods to 63 per cent.

Last month those same farmers and their colleagues from Waterford co-op turned out in their thousands to vote for the merger of two of the Republic's leading food companies. The share transfer deal creates a group with annual sales of £2.5 billion and operating profits of £100 million. AWG operates in

the Republic, Britain and the US. It has a milk pool of more than one billion gallons and cheese production capacity close to 330,000 tonnes. It processes around 1.7 million pigs and almost as many sheep annually. The combined Avonmore and Waterford co-operative now owns a 55 per cent stake in the new company.

Mr O'Neill is confident the scale of the combined operations will give AWG a leading market position as the consolidation in the food industry gathers pace. He believes the company will benefit from the increasing shift by major retailers to one big producer. "When we go into any of the major multiples now the AWG will be seen as a very important part of the British food industry and I believe that will give us a pivotal position there," he said.

The UK, which will account for £1 billion of AWG's sales, is also likely to suffer casualties under the current examination of operations, although Mr O'Neill refused to be drawn on the subject. Analysts have suggested that Waterford's whey plant in Appleby, Cumbria, and Avonmore's cheese plants in Llangefni, north Wales, and Whitchurch, Shropshire, will be

candidates for closure. "We have a combined 15 per cent of the UK liquid milk market and we believe we need to get up to north of 20 per cent," Mr O'Neill said. "I think you are going to see four or five players who will emerge as the leaders with about 20 per cent each and we want to be one of them."

Although AWG already has a substantial share of the UK's cheese production, largely because of Waterford's recent acquisition of The Cheese Company, he thinks there may be scope for in-fills in its range, particularly in continental cheeses. In America there is already speculation that one or two cheese facilities will be sold or become part of new joint-venture arrangements.

In the Republic, savings are likely to be sought in administration and in such areas as milk

collection and processing. Some analysts have suggested job losses could be as high as 600. Analysts anticipate savings of £15 million to £20 million in the first year of combined operations.

Mr O'Neill is convinced changing patterns of food consumption in Asia, particularly China, over the next decade will provide most opportunities for expansion by Western companies, including AWG. However, he is worried that the present EU quota regime for many foods is restricting their ability to access those markets.

The solution, he believes, lies in a two-tier quota system. "One quota to provide a guaranteed price for a certain quantity of produce and another quota under which people would produce what they wanted to at world market prices," he said. Mr O'Neill has given warning that if something is not done quickly, only companies from Australia, New Zealand and Canada will be in a position to tap into these rapidly expanding markets.

## B&Q hammers in its message while rivals are left trailing

A shake-out in the DIY sector is inevitable, says Sarah Cunningham

If you ever want to annoy the normally genial Jim Hodgkinson, try suggesting that B&Q, the do-it-yourself (DIY) company he chairs, has been helped to its market-leading position by good luck.

"Luck? It's not luck, it's hard work," he exclaims. But while no one disputes that B&Q's current success is partly the result of hard work, there is also general agreement that in the past 18 months, it has been very lucky.

"B&Q is clearly in pole position and doing far better than anyone else in DIY," says John Richards, retail analyst at NatWest Markets, adding—in an aside guaranteed to infuriate Mr Hodgkinson—"It has had a lot of luck."

B&Q's good fortune is that all the other major DIY retailers have been through some sort of turmoil just at the point that their market was beginning to recover along with the surge in house buying. The current year is expected to be the best for the DIY sector since the boom of the Eighties. And while Do It All, Homebase and Wickes have had nasty problems to deal with, B&Q has been able to romp off with market share.

The question all the chains are having to face is how they will cope when market conditions turn less favourable. Exactly when that will be is anyone's guess, but even the bullish Mr Hodgkinson thinks the DIY market will be tougher next year than this year.

B&Q's strategy is quite simple—it wants to build its market share. In the overall DIY market, it now claims nearly 19 per cent, while among the larger chains it reckons to have 43 per cent, up 3.5 per cent on a year ago. Mr Hodgkinson would like to see that share grow to 60 per cent.

He thinks that B&Q has only one serious competitor: Sainsbury's Homebase. That business's particular problems arise from the 1995 purchase of the Texas chain



Fewer B&Q Warehouses were opened last year than originally planned, reputedly an issue between Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy and Jim Hodgkinson

from Ladbroke for £250 million. The deal catapulted Homebase into second place in the DIY market, but it has also cost far more than expected to integrate the two very different chains.

Although the Texas logo has now disappeared and all the stores are now known as Homebase, only about 40 out of the nearly 200 former Texas stores have been fully converted. Sales in the unconverted stores have dragged down the performance of the whole Homebase business, and, some analysts say, the poor extension of the otherwise good image of Homebase.

Wickes's problems are quite different. It has spent the past year buried in accounting problems after the discovery of a £51 million black hole and is being run by a new set of managers. Its previous managers are under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office.

Do It All, now wholly owned by Boots after buying out WH Smith's half share, has been struggling with a major store closure programme. It is downmarket of Homebase

and observers believe that it has been struggling to build a stronger brand. Although as part of the highly profitable Boots group, its problems have been obscured, a recent trading statement suggested that it was not enjoying the sort of sales growth its competitors have reported.

Fortunes can change very quickly in DIY, however. The picture at B&Q is very different from a year and a half ago, before the market had shown any signs of recovery, when it had to report a 33 per cent slump in annual profits. According to widespread rumour at the time, Mr Hodgkinson, then chief executive, came close to leaving the company after falling out with Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, the chief executive of Kingfisher, its parent.

The reputed row was about the speed of expansion of the B&Q Warehouse chain. While Sir Geoffrey wanted to cut spending on it, Mr Hodgkinson was apparently pushing to keep up the pace.

In the event, Mr Hodgkinson stayed, and he now denies that any row took place. What is

certain is that the number of Warehouses opened last year was less than originally planned and that Mr Hodgkinson was shifted from the chief executive's to the chairman's seat at B&Q. There are now two people—Bill Whitting and Martin Toogood—looking after operations, while Mr Hodgkinson is handling strategy, including the expansion into Taiwan and beyond.

There is just one B&Q store now open in Taiwan, with a further two set to open this year. An agreement has been signed to open a fourth next year and Mr Hodgkinson reckons there is scope for 25 stores in Taiwan. Mr Hodgkinson says other markets are being looked at: "Everyone looks at China, but it is not easy, not like doing an opening in the UK. We have nothing planned yet," he says.

Back in the UK, all the DIY retailers were piqued by a recent National Consumer Council survey that showed that fewer than seven customers in ten think they are well

cared for in their stores. The bitterest complaints were about unhelpful and inexperienced staff, slow service and long queues.

Mr Hodgkinson says that DIY is a difficult market in which to operate: "If you buy food, you don't ask for recipes and if you buy clothes, you don't ask how the trousers are made," he says. The company's answer has been to employ more people aged 50 and over, who have years of DIY experience, and more former tradesmen. The problem here, as a rival DIY retailer points out, is that tradesmen do not necessarily want to act as shop assistants and are not necessarily the best communicators.

Andy Randall, head of operations at Do It All, said that customers are always put first while Ross McLaren, managing director of Homebase, said that the criticism from customers was "disheartening". But they have all failed to come up with a strong defence of their service levels.

Verdict, the retail consultancy, is as damning as the consumers themselves. It calls it a "do-it-yourself rather than

well help you" market and says that "Service should be key in DIY. There are few other retailing sectors where a product is less ready to use and where shopping is a trial rather than a pleasurable experience."

But Mr Richards points out that B&Q is unlikely to worry too much about service while its competitors remain in disarray and while across the sector as a whole, low margins and rising rents mean that no one is going to splash out on boosting checkout staff levels in the way supermarkets have done.

Another problem that worries the sector as a whole is that there are simply too many DIY outlets. As soon as the market begins to fade, there will have to be another round of closures and perhaps even some further consolidations.

All eyes are now on the housing market. B&Q has done more than its rivals to build defences against a downturn, but no amount of luck will stop it from suffering if, as in the past, the good times for the DIY sector disappear as quickly as they appeared.

## How our mutual friends sustain the buying

Grey Friday: we had that all right. So why no Black Monday? Market talk has been of 1987, when after a small rise in interest rates, the Dow fell 30 per cent in a few days. The charts have been looking ominously similar to 1987: a bull run reaching a speculative climax, equity yields a fraction of real bond yields, and talk of rising rates.

Was this just a muted dress rehearsal, or are we in a different kind of market? In two respects we are. Since 1987 there has been an explosive growth in mutual funds (unit trusts, in English) for the small private investor in the US—only 2 per cent of the total market in 1987, but, according to figures from the Bank Credit Analyst, nearly a quarter of total market capitalisation. At the same time the pension funds have increasingly switched out of direct shareholding into index-tracking funds. (The same trends can be seen less dramatically in Britain and across the Channel, though hardly as all in Japan.) These two institutions have one important feature in common: they tend to go on buying even when the market looks soft. As long as they go on, they prevent the emergence of the one-way, sellers-only market that we call a panic. A correction, then, tends to be orderly, and followed by a bounce. So no crash, now or later? That depends first on what it may take to panic the funds themselves—and only experience will tell us if and when that will happen. Or if their nerves hold on when the funds become cash distributors rather than cash collectors, so that they are routinely sellers rather than buyers. That will happen when enough current savers retire—about a decade from now in the US, and possibly sooner in some European markets.

The US mutual fund explosion has been a great breeder of optimism; but it started as a result of two apparent disasters. First came the virtual collapse of the savings and loans (for Britain, read building societies) in a poisonous fog of speculation and worse. That destroyed what had been the

favourite home for American private savings. Savers switched first into money-market mutuals; but then came the 1987 crash, and cuts in interest rates. The money funds could no longer pay enough to satisfy the US retired: they switched again into equity funds—cautiously at first, and then, as the profits appeared, in a rush.

The total value of the funds has grown nearly 50-fold in a decade, until they are big enough to stabilise the whole market. Not always: equity funds can and do go partly liquid at times. But they are under strong pressure to get fully invested, and pretty quickly. They know that clients will be understanding if fund values drop in line with a falling market, but not if they fail to keep up when the market rises. So as long as funds flow in, they buy, and after a bull run, inflows can far exceed the rather meagre net savings shown in the US national income figures. US investors are at present happy to finance much spending with credit card and mortgage debt, so that they have more to spare for investment.

Steady readers may be minded of the fatal role of broker loans in the 1929 boom and crash, and they are right. There are obviously horrendous risks in a credit-financed bull market: in a real crash, citizens might be unable to repay their credit card and mortgage loans, and so undermine the whole system. So far, though, this only seems to worry a few occupational pessimists like Jim Grant of the *Interest Rate Observer*, and no doubt the governors of the Fed, who give warning of "irrational" share prices. So far, though, they have failed to check the excitement. They wish they knew the secret.

And what about the professionally managed pension funds, which are meant to be sophisticated? Most of them have managed so poorly that trustees have demanded a switch into index-tracking funds, which do just that. Such funds are virtually bound to stay invested. So no selling and no worries? Hardly. A crash may be delayed; but the later it comes, the bigger it may be.



ANTHONY HARRIS

## What crisis?

I SEE Norman "je ne regrette rien" Lamont hasn't lost his touch. The man who brought you the ERM crisis now chairs the Indonesia Fund, and his chairman's statement, coming at the end of six months when the fund underperformed the Jakarta composite index, is about as informative as his alleged off-limits bills.

"Any concerns over comparisons between Thailand and Indonesia are unlikely to be validated," the former Chancellor tells investors. "Unlike

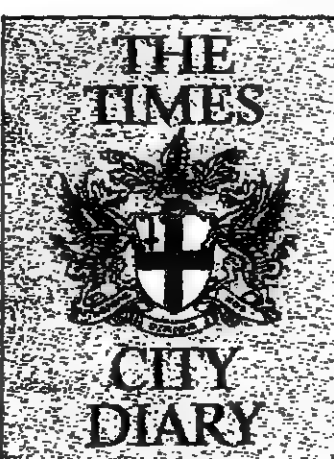
Thailand, the Indonesian economy is currently enjoying one of its best economic cycles... this backdrop has helped to maintain the stability of the devaluation of the Thai baht."

Clearly, Lamont wrote this before the Indonesian rupiah freely floated, suffering a 20 per cent devaluation and causing the market to crash. But he was never one to let a currency crisis bother him.

### Petty sessions

ANOTHER TRUST chairman with South-East Asian interests is Robin Boyle, the former stockbroker now heading Ashley Trust. Boyle, who was the Boyle in Pember Boyle and Dunbar before "downshifting" to Cornwall, is now running a restaurant and guest house called *Memories of Malaya* housed in a former 18th-century coaching inn.

But in spite of being just 11 miles from Rock—or "Fulham-by-the-Sea" as it is known—business is slow. "The locals don't care for spicy food," Boyle tells me. However, he is converting a large upstairs room—which used to be used as a petty sessions court—into a huge suite that he will rent out at "extortionate rates". Looks like the place for Michael Hardern to hatch his Co-op plot.



WHAT is Sir Terence Conran up to? First pre-processed chips are discovered being delivered to his swanky Bluebird Cafe, then one finds an interesting range of products on sale at his intimate Quaglin's restaurant. Alongside the colognes in the gentlemen's rest rooms is a notice saying "emergency supplies are also available". Whatever can this mean?

### Safe bet

MY NEWLY instituted Rod Stewart award for generosity goes to the Bristol & West Building Society. It is planning to renew its sponsorship of

Bristol Rugby Club. Under the old deal, the rugby union team was offering a line out of incentives including £50,000 for winning the Courage League (as was), £20,000 for victory in the Pilkington Cup or £50,000 if Bristol were the European champions. In the end Bristol had a less than storming season and picked up only £20,000 for scoring more than 40 tries. And the building society didn't even shell out for that, as it paid £10,000 for an insurance policy to cover the payouts. It is currently talking to Lloyd's of London about a new policy. My man with the oval ball and the oranges at half-time is not betting on a wildly increased premium this year.

TOMKINS, I hear, is looking for a new non-executive director. The group has only three and admits that Charles Gates—who joined when Tomkins bought his company last year—is not exactly independent. Another non-exec is Roger Holland, the former chief executive of Cray Electronics, now Anite. In spite of the army-bargy surrounding Anite, Ian Duncan, the Tomkins finance director, is quick to Holland's defence. "He's a very capable businessman." Tell that to Anite's shareholders.

### Undercover

A SCURRILOUS suggestion reaches my ears as to why Scottish Media—

the TV group that changed its name when it bought The Herald in Glasgow—was willing to pay 205p a share to pick up a 29.9 per cent stake in Ulster TV last week. The story is that Scottish's chief executive Gus Macdonald, using the skill he picked up as an investigative journalist, discovered that Lord Hollick's United News & Media was just about to make a bid for Ulster at 205p a share. So to thwart the Labour peer, and curry favour with his Ulster-born director, Mirror Group man David Montgomery, Gus slipped in first. Impressive, if true.

JASON NISSE



Lord Hollick's bid for a stake in Ulster TV was thwarted

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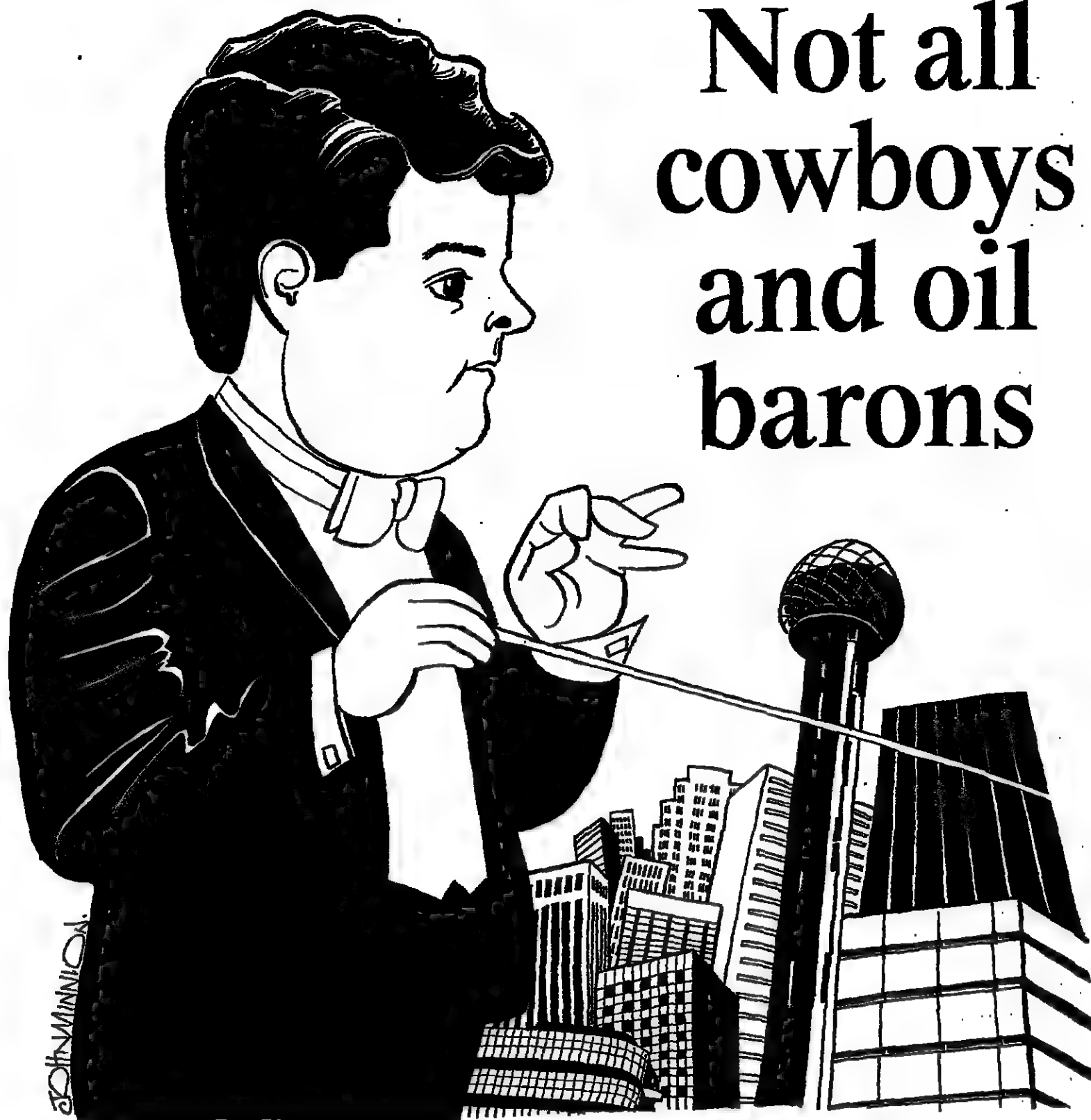
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## Not all cowboys and oil barons

Dallas has set about building itself a world-class orchestra, and the results can be judged at the Proms in London this weekend. Richard Morrison reports

In some towns you can smell the ambition. Dallas is such a place. Its improbably skewed skyscrapers are more ostentatious than you find anywhere else: its entrepreneurs hungrier for the deal; its mansions more palatial; its football team the costliest in America; its can-do bravado exuberant even by Texan standards.

Perhaps there is something a bit pathological about the place, as though a strenuous demonstration of corporate America at its most dazzling will somehow expunge all memory of one black day in November 1963. But whatever makes Dallas tick, it ticks loud and clear.

So when the city decided to pick up its venerable orchestra and hurl it into the musical superleague, there was no doubt in anybody's mind (at least in north Texas) that the name of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra would soon be up there with New York, Chicago and Boston. Has it arrived yet? That may be judged at the Proms on Sunday night, when the Dallas Symphony performs American music and Tchaikovsky under the direction of Andrew Litton (left), the young American appointed as its music director three years ago. But if bags of money, determination and civic pride count for anything, Dallas could soon top the league.

Its financial circumstances are already enough to turn any British orchestral manager green with envy. In the late 1980s, backed by nearly \$100 million of corporate, private and city money, Dallas engaged one of the world's most expensive architects, I.M. Pei (of Louvre pyramid fame), to build a concert hall that would astound the world. The gamble paid off: Pei's extraordinary creation, with its eye-popping dome, vast foyers of the purest Italian marble, showboat-style interior and revolutionary acoustic design (by Russell Johnson, who would later do the same for Birmingham), became a nightly showcase for smart Dallas society.

Ticket sales soared. Dallas has now completed its eighth successive sold-out season. It is one of only five American orchestras currently operating without a deficit. "Our marketing manager has just been in London to advise your Royal Opera House," says Eugene Bonelli, the orchestra's president, with only the merest trace of gloom.

But ticket sales are only the half of it. Private and corporate giving on a truly Texan scale brings the orchestra a further \$6 million a year. Social events run by committees of rich ladies add \$1 million annually.

That level of fundraising has enabled the orchestra to take a bold step: rather than waiting for the culturally apathetic TV networks to broadcast orchestral concerts, the Dallas Symphony is financing

and filming its own series of music programmes aimed at children. These are then passed on to TV stations for broadcast.

Now there is a drive to take the orchestra's endowment fund, currently \$45 million, up to \$100 million by the centenary season in 2000, in order to attract the best players on top salaries. That eye-popping figure won't be the biggest in America. The Boston Symphony has an astonishing \$130 million stashed away. But no orchestra has accelerated quicker from small-town band to international status. "Dallas is a wealthy city, and people here see investment in their orchestra as very important to the city's image, and hence to its future wealth," Bonelli says.

The biggest change in Dallas's life, however, has been the arrival of Litton as music director. He was just 34 when he came and still looks like a puppyish high-school student. The appointment was risky and surprising. Even today,

getting the players to come out of their shells."

He has also changed the orchestra's repertoire. An English-music festival is one project; another is a complete cycle of Mahler's symphonies, including the gigantic Eighth in 2000 as a climax to the orchestra's centenary.

"That would be an ironic twist of fate for me," Litton says. "When I was in England we were going to do Mahler's Eighth for the Bournemouth orchestra's centenary, but the funding was withdrawn by the local council, who felt we should be doing English music. So, like Scarlett O'Hara on the cart at the end of Part One of *Gone With the Wind*, I vowed that this would never happen to me again."

Will the Eighth bring Litton's Mahler cycle to a close? "Possibly," he says. "I said that I would wait until I was 40 before conducting the Ninth; you should have lived some before attempting that piece. Well, I turn 40 in May 1999, so there is time to slot it in before 2000."

Litton took something else from his English years that might profoundly affect musical life in Dallas: a generous appreciation of Simon Rattle's achievement in Birmingham. "Like Dallas, Birmingham was a place that really tried hard to build up a cultural life. Such places have an energy that is missing in more established set-ups. While the London crowd was sitting around thinking 'business as usual', Rattle showed that a long-lasting monogamous relationship between one conductor and one orchestra can build up something really special, even in the most unlikely place."

Can Litton pull off the same trick in Dallas? Certainly, the Mahler Two that I heard him conduct in Dallas a few months ago was an electrifying mixture of passion, power and precision. The question is whether the genial Litton quite has the ruthless streak that all top conductors occasionally need.

But the progress so far has been encouraging. Litton only wishes that more American critics acknowledged the success story. "The press here has fostered such pessimism about classical music. When you read in *The New York Times*, on five consecutive Sundays, articles about how the death knell has sounded for symphony orchestras, you feel like shouting: 'Hey, tell the readers the good news too! In Dallas, we're winning.' But, nobody ever mentions that."

● The Dallas Symphony performs Roy Harris, Samuel Barber and Tchaikovsky at the Proms on Sunday at 7.30pm (Albert Hall, 071-589 8212; also broadcast live on BBC2 and Radio 3). It then visits Waterfront Hall, Belfast, Aug 31; National Concert Hall, Dublin (Sept 1) and Symphony Hall, Birmingham (Sept 3).

## A Russian bear fight

BBC PROMS

which followed, we hear Glinka again, not just in the tripping Ukrainian folk tune but in the surging melancholy.

Glinka brought such "Russianness" firmly into the European tradition. But when it comes to bringing Russian-ness out in a performance, Osmo Vänskä and the BBC

Scottish Symphony Orchestra were sharing the Albert Hall platform with strong competition. In the bear-like shape of Grigory Sokolov. And from the moment Sokolov hit the keys running, the

orchestra paled beside him. Vänskä seemed curiously intent on refining his reading, with self-conscious pianissimos verging on the timorous. The result was that Sokolov, whose own palette is richly orchestral, almost drowned them out. Sokolov is a mature artist with a fearsome energy

to unleash; and by the finale he seemed to have become impatient with the orchestra, and hurried towards the end with increasing pugnacity.

Vänskä's sense of restraint was channelled to better effect in Shostakovich's First Symphony. The first movement, if slack, can sound like a comic steepchase, but Vänskä's tight grip gave it urgency.

As devotion looms, it was an opportune moment to dwell on the impassioned words of the Pict Calgacus against the Imperial Romans, subject of Edward McGuire's *Calgacus*. His eloquent speech is here transformed into a rousing, beguiling melody, played by Robert Wallace as he strode down the stalls steps. For this climactic moment strings provided a drone and drums a dramatic commentary. This is a piece of great originality which has not dated in 20 years.

HELEN WALLACE

## Friends share a new Dutch treat

Barry Millington welcomes the chamber music festival at Delft

MUSIC festivals proliferate in summer: like poppies in a cornfield, and some may ask whether we really need a new one like Isabelle van Keulen's at Delft. In fact, this is a new type of festival that has sprung up in recent years — obvious models are Kuhmo in Finland, Gidon Kremer's Lockenhaus in Austria and Leif Ove Andsnes's Risør in Norway — precisely as an antidote to the international circus of Edinburgh, Salzburg and the rest.

Van Keulen has persuaded a group of friends — artists of the calibre of the Vogler Quartet, clarinetist Michael Collins, trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger, as well as Kremer and Andsnes themselves — to come to the historic city of Delft and play together for next to nothing. In return, they can investigate repertoire they might not elsewhere and they get a substantial, receptive audience. The venue is the courtyard of the Prinsenhof Museum, specially converted with a steel and glass roof, and the acoustics are excellent, encouraging a quality of listening rare on the festival circuit.

This is all the more remarkable given the challenging nature of the programming. Stravinsky and the equally uncompromising Swedish composer Allan Pettersson — a rugged, powerful individualist — loomed large in this first year: there was also bracing percussion music from Xenakis and the Dutchman Sytze Smit, alongside works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schubert.

Of the two world premieres, Smit's *Songs and Games* was the more worthwhile. Six percussionists, led by the excellent Peter Sadlo, engaged in lyrical and lucid dialogue with a pro-active, solo violin (Van Keulen), the latter rhapsodising freely but constantly initiating new phases. A passage for vibraphone and marimba had an especially evocative quality, but it was Van Keulen's climactic stroke on the tam-tam that crystallised the theatrical impulse behind the work.

The other world premiere was by Mendelssohn — Vladimir Mendelssohn, that is, a member of Van Keulen's Isos Quartet. The jocular title of *2 Caprices No 3* gives notice of a black, heavy-handed humour in which an uneasy marriage of classical and modernist harmony results in a pretentious mish-mash.

More rewarding was Hardenberger's collaboration with the poet Jacques Werup in *Homage to Life*, in which solo trumpet pieces by Takemitsu, Kagel and others were delivered with this player's incomparable mastery of sonority and technique. Elsewhere, Michael Collins made several outstanding contributions and there were innumerable fresh, invigorating performances of more standard repertoire works too.

No highly paid arts consultant would have dreamt up such a recipe, but at a stroke Delft has established both an identity and an audience. Highly impressive and all profoundly encouraging.

## GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

ASHA KAHN

Age: 28.

Profession: Actress.

African summer: *My Native Land*, a new play by Rodney Clark set in British East Africa between 1936 and 1940, opens tomorrow at the Lyric Studio. Hammer-smith, with Kahn in the lead as Poppy, the 19-year-old daughter of a wealthy Indian businessman.

Synopsis: Poppy defies her father's wishes by becoming a schoolteacher and beginning an inter-racial affair with a working-class Englishman. "I think at that age I was quite like Poppy — very independent and with an idealistic view of the world."

Happy return: Appearing at the Lyric will bring extra satisfaction because she has already spent hundreds of hours there — working as a waitress to pay the rent during her final year at LAMDA. "I would always look jealously at the actors coming in and out of the Lyric, wonder what it was like for them as performers and wish it was me."

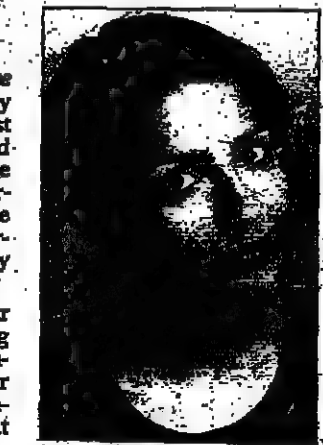
Background: Born in Punjab, she came to London with her family at the age of six. "I didn't speak a word of English, but was still young enough that learning a new language from scratch at school was not a problem."

First stage appearance: Durdans Park Middle School, Southall. "A wonderful teacher called Peter Smith would get us to act out little scenes for his assembly talks. I was hooked."

Training: In her late teens, the student groups run by Questors Theatre in Ealing were "the real doorway" to acting. Unable to secure a maintenance grant for a drama course she spent three years working to save money, first as a clerk with Ealing Council, then as a nanny.

Does race make a difference? "When I finally went to LAMDA, I was the only Asian out of 32 students in my year. That made me look around and think about what my position in this profession might be. My first job after graduating was in a production of *Macbeth* at the Tricycle Theatre which used colour-blind casting. That gave me confidence."

Short-term forecast: "There's a strong crop of Asian writers emerging at the moment, people like Ayub Khan-Din, Farv Bunsall and Ravi Kapoor, which will mean more diverse stage roles for Asian actors. Whatever the part or play, I just want to be working. That's the best feeling."



ASHA KAHN

DANIEL ROSENTHAL

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For too long Hollywood has ruled the science fiction roost. Now, Sheila Johnston reports, the old empire is striking back

# Close encounters of the Euro kind

When Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* opened the Cannes Film Festival in May, the trade publication *Variety* described it huffily, as "a largely European attempt to make an American-style sci-fi spectacular". Critics on both sides of the Atlantic had the same view: since the blockbusting space operas of the 1970s, America has colonised the science fiction genre, and woe to anyone who dares trespass. Weeks later, the success of *The Fifth Element* in America indicated that it could be time to think again. Europeans are venturing back into the galaxy.

This week sees the opening of *Event Horizon*, a slab of Gothic



Not very Spielberg: *Event Horizon*, which opens in Britain on Friday, is a Gothic horror film with Tarkovsky overtones which happens to be set on board a space ship

There's a definite sensibility emerging. It's a cinema of ideas.

horror in deep space from the British director Paul Anderson. The Spanish director Guillermo Del Toro will have his new horror-fantasy, *Mimic*, at the Venice Film Festival next month, while Gabriele Salvatores's *Nirvana* has been a commercial hit in its native Italy, launching a small crowd of local imitators.

The story of a video-game player (Christopher Lambert) struggling to escape his destiny, *Nirvana* is a dramatic departure for its director-producer team, Salvatores and Maurizio Toti: their most notable previous hit was *Medieval*, a gentle comedy about a platoon of Italian soldiers on a Greek island during the Second World War, which won the Best Foreign Film Oscar in 1992.

The makers of *Event Horizon* can back up that claim. Anderson says that one of the works he studied before shooting began was Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972), the quintessential European arthouse science-fiction movie. "In American films the characters come on screen with a wisecrack and they're part of a team," Anderson says. "But there's a terrible loneliness about *Solaris*. Before the central character goes on his mission, we see him staring at a

puddle for what seems about 15 minutes. Then it begins to rain and he walks back to his house. At the beginning of *Event Horizon* you see the central character in his white pod, and he's just a sad, lonely man. For the first seven minutes, only one sentence is said: 'Clare, God, I miss you.' "Also I think the darkness of the visual style is very European. The spaceship is based on the floorplan of Notre Dame Cathedral: it is cruciform, the thruster rockets are

towers from Notre Dame turned on their side and all the superstructure is based on the stained-glass windows, but rendered in iron and steel rather than glass and lead. There was a lot of religious imagery in the script and it set me thinking along those lines." One reason for the new wave of sci-fi is the growing clout of the international market. In the past, American films earned most of their box office takings on their home turf. Today, as Jeremy Bolt,

the producer of *Event Horizon*, points out, "foreign earnings can be worth up to 70 per cent of our profits. That's why Hollywood executives are saying, 'We must make sure we appeal in foreign markets, therefore perhaps we need foreign sensibilities.'"

Small wonder, then, that studios and independent mini-majors such as Miramax are scouring Europe for talent like other writers. Fowler notes "a definite sense of the market being trawled." *Event Horizon* was bankrolled by Paramount, while elsewhere Europeans have been recruited to give American sci-fi a novel spin: the director Paul Verhoeven for *Starship Troopers* and Jean-Pierre Jeunet (*Delicatessen*) for *Alien Resurrection*, the fourth film in the lucrative *Alien* series.

battle the scum of the universe in films such as *Mars Attacks!*, *Independence Day* and *Men in Black*. "They're here, they're bad, let's have lots of explosions," as the critic Nigel Floyd puts it. "It's all just flag-waving nonsense."

Significantly, the only recent big-budget American movie to depart from this principle has been *Contact*, a philosophical, non-action orientated piece in which Jodie Foster makes contact with friendly extraterrestrials. Opening in America opposite *Men in Black*, it drew mixed reviews and looks likely to do vastly inferior business. But we may love it this side of the pond.

Euro sci-fi might have no desire to ape Hollywood-style action-adventure, but it probably also has no option. We have the technical resources to produce sophisticated special effects, but rarely the budgets. "Old-style sci-fi used relatively inexpensive physical effects, with models," says Floyd. "Today most of them are digital, which means a lot of money. Industrial Light and Magic, George Lucas's post-production house, claims that it is second only to NASA in terms of computer power."

"People here have been trying to film J.G. Ballard's *High Rise* for years. But it's a \$60 million movie. Who's going to put up that kind of money?" On the other hand, it could be exactly this which enables Euro sci-fi to avoid the trap of American event movies, where — as Hollywood screenwriters have been increasingly complaining — story and character often lose out to spectacular effects.

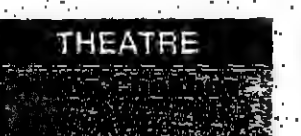
But the jury remains out on the existence of a genuine long-term revival. To date, *Nirvana* has not attracted a British distributor. And advance reaction suggests that mixed reviews await *Event Horizon*, although the film-makers remain bullish. And in any case, does it matter what the critics say? When the same *Variety* critic who trashed *The Fifth Element* hammered Anderson's first film, *Shopping*, as "a reckless orgy of destruction", they merely splashed the quote proudly over the poster.

## Traveller with a roving eye

The revised version of Michael Pennington's celebrated one-man show appears on a sorrowful day for the Peter Hall Company. Ed and David Milvich, Canadian producers and owners of the Old Vic, have announced that the building is to be sold in December.

This is a sad curtailment of a project that Hall hoped might last five years, a revival of the repertory system he has always believed works best for actors, playing seven days a week. I have no figures for the season as a whole, but when I saw *Waiting for Godot* two weeks ago the house was packed. Pennington manages to make a coded reference to Beckett's play in the course of his performance, which is quite an achievement when the man he is portraying died two years before Beckett was born.

This biographical entertainment was first seen at the National Theatre in 1984, since when more details of Chekhov's life have surfaced as the oil-stick of Soviet censorship fades away. These revelations chiefly show the man's fondness for women, fat or thin, Russian or foreign, and must have been suppressed because censors always believe that the only hero is a sedate hero. A daydream of settling in The Netherlands with a Dutch woman and a cow is particularly endearing. Pennington walks into view from the darkness at the rear of the stage, supporting himself on a knobby black cane, trimly bearded, pince-nez



clipped to the bridge of his nose. Open trunks are scattered across the stage, and in the course of the evening he packs books and other small objects into them, as if about to set off for Yalta, where he lived the last years of his life, or

Badenweiler, where he was to die. His memories roam around his harsh childhood, early years as doctor and hack writer, and the astonishing journey across Siberia in 1890. Presenting the hallucinations in his story *The Black Monk* as being the dying Chekhov's own experience is effective, but so is Pennington's rumour throughout, his light voice caressing us with precise, vivid descriptions, so courteously spoken, and

where pessimistic nonetheless crossed by shafts of comic observation. He can be tart about the earnestness of Dostoevsky, passionately distressed when obliged to witness brutality, and evidently an excellent teller of jokes. The mosaic Pennington assembles from the mass of Chekhov material is the portrait of a man for all seasons.

JEREMY KINGSTON

## Where all is for the worst

THE first mistake that Alan Ayckbourn's characters make is getting born. Parents are a disaster and so, on the whole, is the world. The second mistake is exercising free will, for it regularly lands Ayckbourn's characters in relationships. Often they get married, which is a still graver error, for "whoever you decide to share your life with invariably turns out to be the worst possible choice".

The speaker is Robert McBain's grumpy old Edward Grey, who may be trying to kill his wife by tampering with her gas stove and electric blanket. In turn, Auriol Smith's placid, reproachful Emma may be slipping bits of broken glass into his sandwiches. But it is their three daughters who are the main focus of Ayckbourn's comic pessimism. Suppose they had formed different attachments. Would those still be the "worst possible choices"?



Family Circles puts Edward's dictum to the test. Aggressive Polly, fussy Jenny and subversive Deirdre turn up for their parents' predictably miserable wedding anniversary, their three men in tow; but, as scene succeeds scene, Oliver, David and James change partners until each has run an entire gamut of Gray sisters. And by the end it is difficult to say which is the least worst pairing.

The play dates from 1970, had its first London showing at the Orange Tree in 1978, was revived there last December, and undeniably merits a summer outing. It is not top-notch Ayckbourn, not *Abigail*, *Person Singular*, nor *Just Between Ourselves*. But if we hadn't been spoilt by those pieces, we would surely regard it as a remarkable blend

of technical bravura and funny-gloom observation. Joanne Mitchell's Jenny is always pregnant and harried. Prue Clarke's Polly, childless and always angry, gives Oliver the hardest time. Emma Gregory's Deirdre gets spectacularly drunk when she is married to David. The problem with the play remains its last scene, which occurs the morning after an offstage celebration that apparently ended with horrified fellow-diners watching the family like gawpers at the monkey-house. This is a free-for-all in which personalities and (hence) personalities change with baffling, too baffling, frequency. But at least there is no missing the final point. "If they can just keep working at their marriages," says Mother wistfully. "Disastrous," grunts Father. And Father knows best.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

## Saviour the Royal Ballet never had

DANCE: John Percival on the choreographer John Cranko, a genius cut down in his prime

and Juliet. He persuaded Benjamin Britten and John Piper to collaborate with him in mounting the first three-act ballet with British music, choreography and design. The *Princess of the Pagodas*. He directed opera, formed his own small company for a summer season — and still found time to write and direct a long-running revue, *Cranks*.

Even with that track record, Cranko felt himself frustrated for lack of work, and in 1961 accepted an invitation to direct the ballet in Stuttgart. It had been a minor although respectable troupe in a theatre dominated by opera. Over the next eight years Cranko built up both the repertoire and the dancers to the point that when the Stuttgart Ballet gave its first New York season at the Metropolitan Opera House, it enjoyed what *The New York Times* critic Clive Barnes described as "a great, roaring, shouting success".

Cranko's "ballet miracle", as it was dubbed by the German press, produced some of the best ballets of his time. He had a special flair for big dramatic works, but we must not forget that he made many subtle and original shorter works, among them his delicate Debussy suite *Brouillards*, the best of all stagings of Stravinsky's *Jeu de cartes*, and *Poème de l'enfance* for Margot Fonteyn, giving her, at 51, the chance for the first time to play a fully mature woman, instead of the usual run of balletic "young girls".



The newly famous John Cranko at home in the late 1950s

But Cranko never confined his interest to his own choreography. He gave MacMillan opportunities to create works, including his masterpiece *Song of the Earth*, after Covent Garden had vetoed it. It was Cranko, in fact, who had first nudged MacMillan towards trying choreography, and a whole generation of new ballet-makers grew up in his Stuttgart company, the most notable being Jiri Kylian and John Neumeier. "Just to be in that creative atmosphere was exciting," Kylian said. "John gave people chances and made them grow."

Similarly, he had a tremendous gift for spotting potential in a dancer and bringing it out. Famously, he found his muse, Marcia Haydée, when she applied for a corps de ballet vacancy, and persuaded the management to give her a contract as a ballerina. She and the two unknown young men who became her regular partners, Egon Madsen and Richard Cragun, grew into great dancers under Cranko's inspiration.

So just consider what Cranko might have done for the Royal Ballet. Heaven knows it could do with some of his boldness in lateral thinking to overcome — or, better, to have prevented — the plight in which it now finds itself.



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# Life goes on, but it can never be the same

There was little doubt that a film about the Hungerford massacre would be moving, the only real question was whether *Hungerford: Ten Years On* (BBC2) would do it in a way that proved worthwhile. As the narration noted, we have become so familiar with mass loss of life—Hungerford, Dunblane, Hillsborough, Lockerbie, Zebrugg, Abernethy.

But what the narration didn't mention is that we have also become familiar with how film makers treat such disasters. There is a predictability, an inevitability, even a feeling of tokenism when it comes to significant anniversaries. For half an hour, an hour, whatever, we have a quick fix of vicarious grief and then, with a deep breath and a sigh of relief that it wasn't us, we move on.

Lacy Jago, the producer of last night's film, could do nothing

about human nature. But she could signal, early on, her intention to make this tribute just a little bit different. Instead of children playing, that perennial symbol of life "going on", an elderly couple sang as they did the washing up. They were having such fun that they started to dance around the kitchen. It was a lovely image but it became remarkable once we had learnt the story behind it.

The women singing was Kath Wainwright. Her husband had been killed and she had been wounded by Michael Ryan as they drove into Hungerford to visit their son, who in the cruellest of many cruel twists of fate that day was also the local policeman. She had subsequently remarried and moved to a house that was just 200 yards from where she had been shot. Hungerford was such a lovely little town, she explained. Life had moved on — a devoted new husband, singing, dancing,

bingo at the British Legion — but, amid all this normality, the extraordinary had not been forgotten. "It's true what they say: you don't feel the bullet that hits you."

Jago concentrated on four families and while they all had different and awful stories to tell, they shared much in common, including a deep-felt sense of guilt. Would it have happened if neighbours had befriended him? Could somebody have disarmed him? This was the sort of film where such questions were asked, but not answered.

Some anxieties you sympathised with immediately — the father still haunted by the precise directions he gave his daughter to a picnic site in Saverston Forest. Others took you by surprise, such as the Mayor who felt guilty about the privileged meetings he had with the Prime Minister and the Queen as a direct result of the shootings.

## REVIEW



Matthew Bond

For the victims, it was explained, the manner of their deaths was a defining moment, in that they are destined to be remembered forever as somebody killed by Ryan rather than as the people they were. But, as Jago's intelligent and undoubtedly worthwhile film made clear, it was also a defining moment for those who survived, who now have to live with both the memories of what happened and how they

reacted, however bizarre that now seems.

Kath Wainwright's daughter, Kay, recalled feeling jealous of her policeman brother as he fielded media interest, even when the press rounded on him when they discovered that he had signed Ryan's firearms certificate. Trevor, her brother, not surprisingly remembered it rather differently. What he missed was the spirit in the town for the year after the killings, a spirit that ensured — once again — that life did go on.

A completely different set of feelings were required to get through *Plane Crazy*, a documentary series charting Bob Cringely's attempt to build a plane in 30 days. The crucial word in that sentence is "series". I mean, how on earth can one man's vainglorious attempt to build a plane in quadruple quick time be worth three hours of fairly prime-time television? I had a better idea when

Day One finally began after 44 minutes. Cringely is clearly not a man to rush his 180 minutes of fame.

I have so far failed to provide you with an important piece of information: Cringely is American; very, very American. He lives and works in Silicon Valley, receives more than 100 e-mails a day and has no idea of the meaning of the words "shy and retiring". What Bill Bryson did for Britain and Peter Mayle did for Provence, Cringely hopes to do for aviation.

If he just stopped wasting our time, I might not mind. But last night he spent an inordinate time honing his own innovative design for the plane, only to have it completely reworked in the last ten minutes by the man he had employed to prepare the blueprints. I think we were supposed to share the frustration (being West

Coast, Cringely is big on sharing) but then I was nursing a large chunk of my very own. One last thing, especially for those thinking this must be a variation on the *Challenge Anneka* theme, Cringely has already built five planes. Now we have to watch him building his sixth. Where's the fun in that?

The fun in *Home Ground* (BBC2) was discovering there is a flourishing trade fair for fossils, where \$40,000 will buy you your own fossilised tree fern, complete with fossilised fish. What the fish were doing up the tree fern in the first place was never explained. The mild disappointment was watching a well-intentioned programme never quite hit its target, never quite proving that the commercial exploitation of fossils was necessarily a bad thing. The tree fern and attendant fish, by the way, were destined to end up in a casino. Very surreal.

- BBC1**
- 6.00am Business Breakfast (80575)
  - 7.00am BBC Breakfast News (78643)
  - 8.00am Breakfast News Extra (7863372)
  - 9.20am Ready, Steady, Cook (7) (78634682)
  - 9.50am Either (7) (78637049)
  - 10.20am Put It to the Test (5997020)
  - 10.45am Carri's Caribbean (7) (286914)
  - 11.00am News (7) and weather (7230865)
  - 11.05am Due South (7) (78635876)
  - 11.50am Good Neighbours (7) (8698336)
  - 12.00am News (7) and weather (4305865)
  - 12.05pm Wipeout (7) (7864486)
  - 12.35am Neighbours (7) (8698336)
  - 1.00am News (7) and weather (71733)
  - 1.30am Regional News (7) (86982558)
  - 1.40am Murder on Sylmar Street (1992) with Dick Van Dyke, George Hamilton and David Warner. A doctor-detective investigates the apparent suicide of an eminent plastic surgeon. There's no shortage of murder suspects. Directed by Christian I. Nyby II (7862802)
  - 3.10am Quincy (7) (1780488)
  - 4.00am Popeye (2858643) 4.10am Thunderbirds (7) (2854827) 4.20am Morph TV with Tony Hart (2272855) 4.30am Prince of Atlantis (7) (1695484) 5.00am Newsround (7) (2467235) 5.10am The Lowdown (7) (7861818)
  - 5.35am Neighbours (7) (78635876)
  - 6.00am News (7) and weather (336)
  - 6.30am Regional News Magazine (7) (387)
  - 7.00am Big Break Stars of the Future Jim Davidson and John Wingo introduce teenage singer-songwriters attempting to win prizes for their schools (8778)
  - 7.30am TW Time Machine What has become of the inventions featured on *Tomorrow's World* over the years? (7) (575)
  - 8.00am The National Lottery Live from Edinburgh (7) (214468)
  - 8.15am Dick Emery: A Life on the Box A tribute to the late comedian, introduced by Terry Wogan (7) (487556)
  - 8.45am Points of View (7) (190440)
  - 9.00am News Regional News (7) (8665)
  - 9.25am National Lottery Update (869862)
  - 9.30am Men Behaving Badly Deborah and Dorothy go away for a sailing weekend, leaving the men to get up to mischief (7) (786181)
  - 10.00am Inside Story: Smoke Rings A review of a connection between the West's tobacco giants and the smugglers trying to get cigarettes into China? (7) (43001)
  - 10.55am Oasis: Right Here Right Now The band introduces a preview of selected tracks from their third album *Be Here Now* and give their own account of what has undoubtedly been a tumultuous year for them (7) (367336)
  - 11.35am Cool as Ice (1991) with Vanilla Ice, Kristin Minter, Naomi Campbell and Bobby Brown. A motorcycle, who is also a rap singer, rides into a small town and falls for a pretty student — unaware her father is being pursued by crooked cops. Directed by David Koford (470011)
  - 1.05am-4.10am Weather (325377)

- BBC2**
- 6.00am Open University: Four Towns and a Circus (8198579) 6.25am Vibrations (4048376) 6.50am Work and Energy (592777)
  - 7.15am See-See News (7) and signing (862768)
  - 7.30am Teletubbies (7) (1627681) 7.55am Postman Pat (7) (1471468) 8.10am The Really Wild Show (7) (1570848) 8.35am The Really Wild Show (7) (1570848) 8.55am Spidey Man (7) (7863778) 9.35am Smart (863407) 10.05am Science Adventure (863225) 10.25am Firearm Team 10.35am Bump (2270020) 10.45am Teletubbies (802778) 11.15am Aweash with Colour (862877)
  - 11.45am The Private Affairs of Bel Ami (1948) Melodrama with George Sanders as a Parisian who uses his charm with women to advance himself socially, ruthlessly exploiting the talent of a journalist's widow. Based on Guy de Maupassant's story, with Angela Lansbury and John Carradine. Directed by Albert Lewin (1105577)
  - 1.35am For the Love of It (7) (4345982) 1.40am Blockbusters (8691510) 2.05am Natural World Classics (7) (7) (8625952) 3.00am News (7) 3.05am Modern Times (7) (4319522) 3.35am News (7)
  - 4.00am Old Acquaintance (1943) Drama, with Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins. Directed by Vincent Sherman (8518331) WALKER: 4.00am Land of the Eagle (782592) 4.40am The Muppet Show (865533) 5.15am Lifetime (246510) 5.25am Star Trek (380043) 6.10am World Cup Soccer (7890442) 6.10am The Day That Changed My Life (4575) 9.00am One Foot in the Past (7407) 9.30am The Burger and the King (58814)
  - 5.50am Lifetime (7) (454285) 6.00am Star Trek: The Next Generation (7) (869594) 6.45am Pen and Pencil (7) (867193) 7.05am The Muppet Show (7) (867194)

- HTV**
- 6.00am GMTV (7414407)
  - 9.25am Wits, Lies or Draw (7) (5028001)
  - 9.55am Judge Judy (7) (8698327)
  - 10.20am News (7) (8671575)
  - 10.25am Regional News (7) (8698346)
  - 10.30am Murder by the Book (1987) with Robert Hays, Catherine Mary Stewart and Celeste Holm. A writer gets entangled in a murder case worthy of one of his novels. Directed by Mel Damski (5017049)
  - 12.20pm Regional News (7) (4301049)
  - 12.30am News (7) and weather (1882138)
  - 12.55am Shortland Street (186737)
  - 1.30am Home and Away (7) (1480548)
  - 1.50am Labour of Love: The Artists Schwartz Story (1993) Drama, with Ann Jaffe becoming a surrogate mother to her own grandchild. Directed by Jerry London (1401488)
  - 3.20am News (7) (2281223)
  - 3.25am Regional News (7) (2280594)
  - 3.30am Tots TV (7) (2415507) 3.40am Tickle Toot (869827) 3.50am Cartoon Time (8135339) 4.00am The Animal Show (2883338) 4.10am Chatterbox Puppies (7) (2872223) 4.20am Art Attack (7) (2282825) 4.40am Sabrina the Teenage Witch (7) (2289020)
  - 5.10am Yan Can Cook (2130302)
  - 5.40am News (7) and weather (911855)
  - 6.00am Home and Away (7) (785662)
  - 6.25am HTV Weather (7) (16434)
  - 6.30am The West Tonight (7) (758)
  - 7.00am Emmerdale Zoe and Sophie reach an understanding (7) (3846)
  - 7.30am Coronation Street Sally and Natalie engage in a full and frank exchange of views (7) (843)

- CENTRAL**
- As HTV West except:
  - 10.30am Film: Decoration Day (5175704)
  - 12.55pm-1.25pm A Country Practice (186727)
  - 1.50-3.20pm Film: All for Mary (1401485)
  - 5.10-5.40pm Shortland Street (2130322)
  - 6.25-7.00pm Coronation Street (2280595)
  - 10.40am Film: Conan the Destroyer (18321594)
  - 12.30am Film: The Blood of Fu Manchu (531247)
  - 2.15pm Focus (789857)
  - 3.00pm The Chart Show (10063)
  - 4.00pm Central Jobfinder '97 (830524)
  - 5.20pm Asian Eye (894753)
- WESTCOUNTRY**
- As HTV West except:
  - 10.30am Film: A Green Journey (5175704)
  - 12.55pm-1.25pm A Country Practice (186727)
  - 1.50-3.20pm Film: All for Mary (1401485)
  - 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (2130320)
  - 6.00-7.00pm Westcountry News (41914)
  - 10.30pm Westcountry News (478049)
  - 10.45pm Special Report (491759)
  - 11.15pm Alfred Hitchcock Presents (187265)
  - 11.40pm Hunter (748440)
- MERIDIAN**
- As HTV West except:
  - 10.30am Cartoon Time (2975575) 10.40am David the Gnome (4382594) 11.05am Cartoon Time (4382594) 11.25am A Country Practice (186727) 1.50pm Summer Craze (8675372) 2.20-3.20pm Dr Quinn Medicine Woman (860827) 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (2130320) 6.00pm Meridian Tonight (407) 8.30-9.00pm The Channel Story (758) 10.40pm The Plaw (787001) 11.05pm The Longest Day (1962) 11.10pm Highland (86310) 12.05am Alfred Hitchcock Presents (8070773) 6.00pm Freeescape (51402)
- ANGLIA**
- As HTV West except:
  - 10.30am Cartoon Time (2975575) 10.40am David the Gnome (4382594) 11.05am Cartoon Time (4382594) 11.25am A Country Practice (186727) 1.50pm Summer Craze (8675372) 2.20-3.20pm Dr Quinn Medicine Woman (860827) 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (2130320) 6.00pm Anglia Weather (812372) 6.25-7.00pm Anglia News (365898) 10.25pm Anglia News and Weather (478049) 10.45pm Film: I Love You to Death (1832068)
- SAC**
- Starts: 6.00am Sesame Street (73285) 7.00am The Big Breakfast (46881) 8.00am Saved by the Bell: The New Class (4383001) 9.35am The Secret World of Alex Mack (8624575) 10.05am Sister, Sister (786158) 10.35am The Crystal Maze (382594) 11.35am The Big Breakfast (568778) 12.05pm California Dreams (703222) 12.30pm Ricki Lake (8455) 1.00pm South Africa (8675372) 1.15pm The Top (56717001) 1.30pm The Living Sea (81313) 2.00pm Racing from York (8488) 4.00pm Bewitched (372) 4.30am A Game of War (86730) 5.30pm Countdown (136) 6.00pm Newydd (6) (38391) 6.05pm Heno (713440) 6.25pm Hotel Babylon (82533) 7.00pm Paddy's Day (8675372) 7.25pm Garry (432116) 8.00pm Maf Maf (8675372) 8.30pm Newydd (19643) 9.00pm Paddy's Day (8117) 10.00pm Bewitched (37914) 10.35pm Babylon 5 (50016) 11.30pm Paddy's Day (8117) 12.30pm Babylon 5 (50016) 12.55pm Babylon 5 (50016) 1.00am Babylon 5 (50016) 1.30pm Babylon 5 (50016) 2.00am Babylon 5 (50016) 2.30pm Babylon 5 (50016) 3.00pm Babylon 5 (50016) 3.30pm Babylon 5 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## EQUESTRIANISM 37

Change of heart gives Stark his Burghley chance

# SPORT

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 20 1997

## RACING 39

Dettori proves equal to the task on Singpiel



Crowds snub Irish swimmer as long-running drug rumours overshadow victory

# Smith celebrates empty triumph

Gold for Britain as Palmer triumphs

FROM CRAIG LORR  
IN SEVILLE

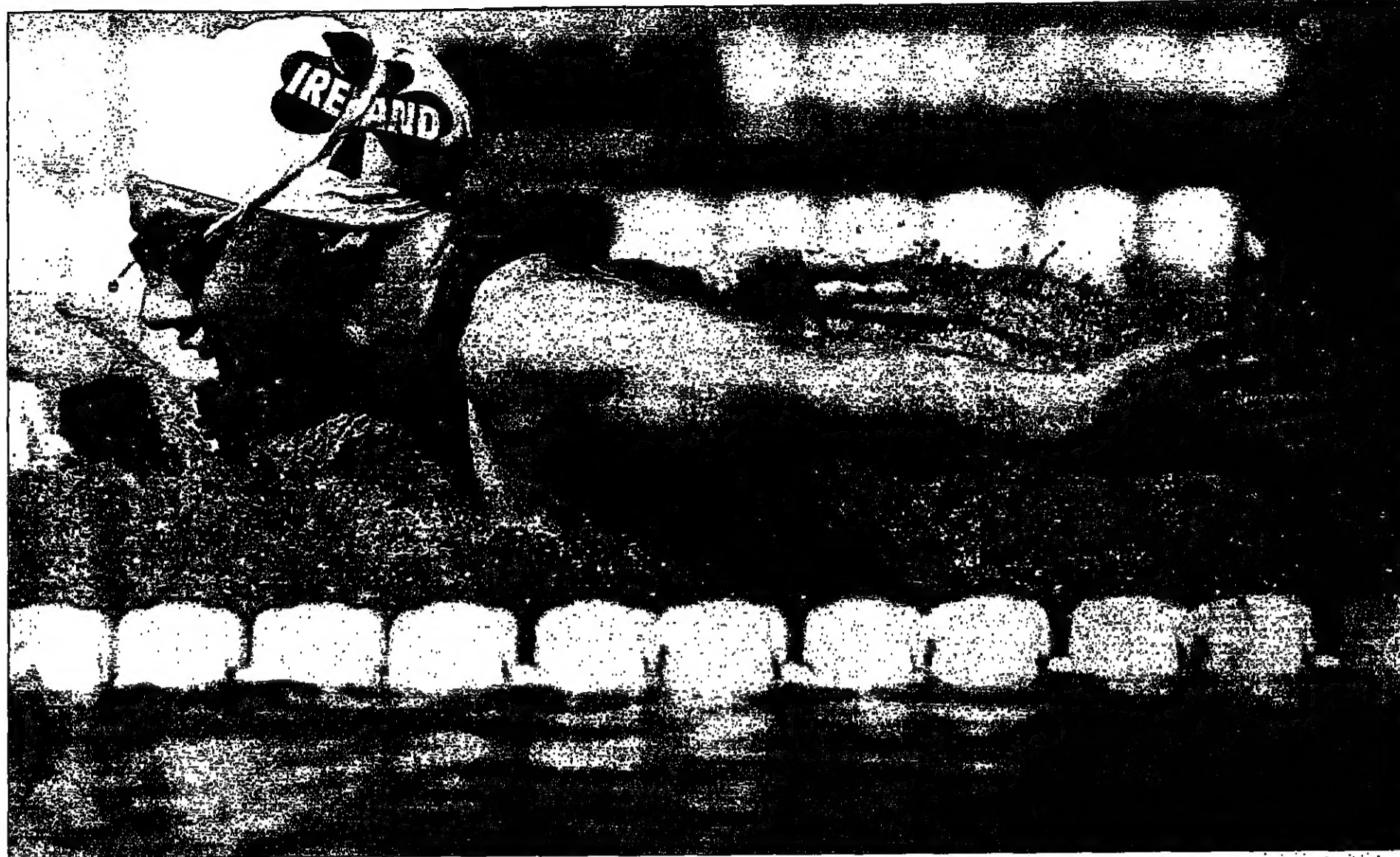


Michael Calvin on a campaign of innuendo haunting the European title holder in Seville

Michelle Smith stood forlornly on the podium, clutching a crumpled Irish tricolour as she waited to receive her latest gold medal. She had no option but to watch the crowd, consisting mainly of coaches and fellow competitors, stream towards the exits. Those who remained at the San Pablo pool here offered her no more than a polite round of applause. The insult was intentional, the victory empty.

That win, in the 400 metres individual medley at the European championships yesterday afternoon, was as predictable as the symbolism of the reaction it aroused. Damnation by faint praise has become an occupational hazard for the triple Olympic champion since she became a watchword for sport's loss of innocence in Atlanta. She has never failed a drugs test yet an immediate summons to her third in the past week merely added another dimension to the innuendo.

"I'm very very proud of what I've done here," she insisted when she emerged from doping control. She maintained firm eye-contact with questioners, but her tremulous voice revealed inner tension. "I don't accept that I'm damned if I do win and damned if I don't. I've



Smith secures her victory in the 400 metres individual medley in the European swimming championships at Seville yesterday. Photographs: Marc Aspland

never felt like I wanted to quit this. Swimming is my life. It's what I do, what I love."

Her husband, the former discus thrower, Erik de Bruin, decided that she had been sufficiently effusive. He nudged her in the back, made a show of bending to collect her kitbag and led her out of the complex, ignoring her obligation to appear at an official press conference. The remote possibility that she could be banned from the championships as a result will set the media agenda for the rest of the week.

Atlanta's morality tale has

soured into a sad soap opera, in which Smith has been typecast as principal villain. All champions are, to an extent, isolated by their achievements, but she has been uniquely marginalised by mistrust. She trains alone, in a four-lane pool in Kilkenny, and has no close friends in the sport. Her husband is omnipresent, a human shield.

Vendettas in the small, occasionally seamy world of Irish swimming are conducted with a subtlety that owes more to expedience than experience. The majority of officials, owed into submission by the unprecedented nature of her success, are blithely non-committal in public. Privately, however, they are resentful of having to promote a tainted role model.

The whispering campaign against the Olympic champion shows no sign of losing its momentum. Damning statistics, charting the unlikely nature of her improvements, are routinely leaked. Details of her drug-testing programme reach the public domain in similarly surreptitious fashion. Inevitably, those sympathetic to her cause use identical methods to get her counter-arguments across.

The gossip has a small-town viciousness in keeping with a scarred sport, because the problems of Irish swimming extend beyond Smith's credibility. Frank McCann,

the former Ireland team manager, is serving a life sentence for the murder of his wife and niece, Derry O'Rourke. Smith's former coach, is awaiting trial on statutory rape charges involving nine swimmers under the age of 17. George Gibney, head coach of the Ireland squad at the Seoul Olympics, fled the country when he was similarly charged.

To be at his wife's side in Seville, de Bruin was obliged to be uncharacteristically emotive. He apologised to the swimming authorities for forging his accreditation for

the last European championship, in Vienna in 1995, but appeared unconcerned by the slur on his character. He makes no attempt to conceal his bitterness at his four-year suspension for drug abuse, which was completed last month.

He is openly dismissive of other coaches, who are suspicious of his refusal to discuss the specifics of his training regime. His wife, who competed in her married name as a gesture of defiance, is his only pupil. He was in seditious mood after her heat yesterday morning when she refused all

interview requests before being ushered towards Chalkie White, an Ireland swimming coach who, in his secondary role of journalist, has become her principal apologist.

The damage-limitation exercise is onerous. Unlike Amy Van Dyken, of the United States, who became a millionaire after winning two individual gold medals in Atlanta, Smith is thought to have earned barely £100,000 from her three Olympic titles. Apart from one appearance in a shampoo commercial, her only other links are with a milk company and the Irish language board.

She is on her third agent in 18 months. The irony is that the debate that continues to focus on Smith is merely the symptom of a bigger problem.

Don Talbot, of Australia, the most influential coach over the past 30 years, is in Seville lobbying for the adoption of a more cohesive anti-drug policy. He recognises the damage inflicted by the globally documented unease about Smith, and is affronted by the drug-driven records set by Chinese swimmers. He insists that more than four out-of-competition tests a year are required.

"People say why, why, why, but they know very well why," he said. "They don't want to admit that our house is not in order. I'm trying to make sure

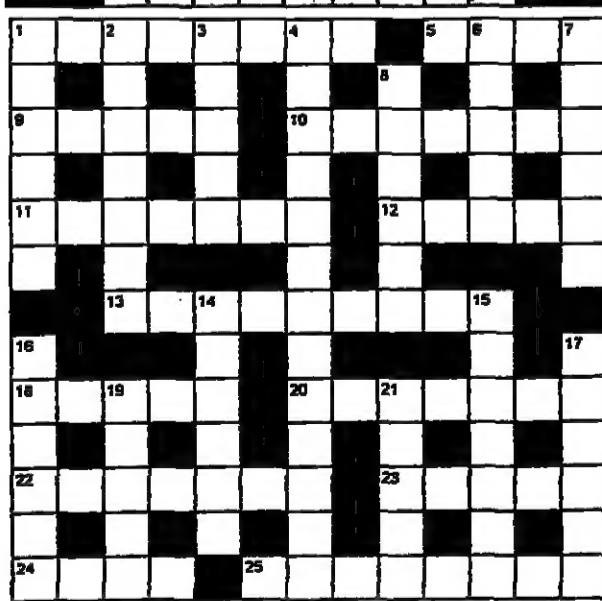
the drug issue doesn't go away because, in a bureaucratic sport like swimming, it can be put to one side."

Smith has heard the slurs, the unsubstantiated rumours. "I don't listen to it anymore," she insisted. "I have had doping control after doping control. If you are a three-times Olympic champion and No 1 in the world, you've got to be tested as much as, if not more, than anyone else. I have been this year."

But her victory yesterday, given suitably bizarre backing by a trumpet playing *Viva España*, again raised more questions than answers. She beat the 15-year-old Ukrainian, Yana Klochkova, over the last 50 metres, but her most daunting opponent will remain the Frankenstein monster of her reputation.

Photograph, page 37

## TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1177

### ACROSS

- 1 Exhausted (4); useless person (8)
- 5 Unwanted plant; feeble person (4)
- 9 Out of order, ruined (5)
- 10 Screw up; collapse (7)
- 11 Word formed of initials (7)
- 12 Show falsity of (5)
- 13 Unwanted scraps (9)
- 18 Jumped (5)
- 20 Cattle disease, may infect man (7)
- 22 Victoria Falls river (7)
- 23 Green snooker fabric (5)
- 24 (Nordic) character (4)
- 25 Ignored (8)

### DOWN

- 1 Decree imposed (6)
- 2 Clothing (arch) (7)
- 3 Relay runners' stick (5)
- 4 Housing; settlement (13)
- 6 Drive out (5)
- 7 Make more profound (6)
- 8 Soap-film talk; risky investment (6)
- 14 In better condition; gasman (6)
- 15 Close-packed (ranks) (7)
- 16 (School club) jacket (6)
- 17 Lengthen (6)
- 19 Capital of Jordan (5)
- 21 Item of furniture; list of data (5)

### SOLUTION TO NO 1176

- ACROSS: 1 Pupa 3 Specific 8 Capable 10 Shred 11 For dear life 13 Stride 15 Aperçu 17 Thin-skinned 20 Chain 21 October 22 Escarole 23 Pied
- DOWN: 1 Pacific 2 Paper 4 Poetry 5 Case in point 6 Forbear 7 Coda 9 Breadwinner 12 Sundered 14 Rat race 16 Escort 18 Nobel 19 Ache

### SOLUTION TO TIMES TWO CROSSWORD 1177

In association with BRITISH MIDLAND

- ACROSS: 1 Rift 3 Outcast 8 Present 9 Admit 10 Swift 11 Elevate 13 Geriatric 17 Maypole 19 Probe 20 Angle 22 Furtive 23 Tiniest 24 Well
- DOWN: 1 Repose 2 Feelingly 3 On the face of it 4 Trace 5 Aim 6 Tether 7 Better 12 Anchorite 14 Report 15 Impart 16 Reject 18 Obese 21 Gin

1st PRIZE of a return ticket travelling economy class to anywhere on BRITISH MIDLAND's domestic or international network is J. Malcolm, Watford, Herts.

2nd PRIZE of a return ticket to anywhere on BRITISH MIDLAND's domestic network is P. Manwaring, Woking, Surrey. All flights subject to availability.

## England ready to let Rowell continue

By MARK SOUSTER

JACK ROWELL is expected to be confirmed as the England coach through to the 1999 World Cup at an emergency meeting of the Rugby Football Union's national playing committee in London today. Given Ian McGeechan's decision to turn down the post and the lack of a credible alternative, it is understood that Rowell will be offered the opportunity to complete the mission he set out on in 1994.

That he wants to continue is not in doubt, but on what terms remains to be seen. He has said that business commitments will restrict him to a part-time role, while the RFU has been adamant that a full-time coach is necessary. However, it is felt that with give and take on both sides and an element of face-saving after the public courting of McGeechan, Rowell will continue.

Rowell, who said yesterday that the issue could have been handled with more sensitivity, was otherwise non-committal, saying only that he was "pretty relaxed" about the situation and did not expect to hear anything conclusive until the

## Lloyd picks moment to rake over the Ashes

By ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT

DAVID LLOYD, the England coach, admitted yesterday that his team had made no progress this summer in narrowing the gap with Australia. On the eve of the final Ashes Test at the Oval, he also expressed his frustration with England's recurrent failings in consistency.

Lloyd told for the first time of his anger behind the closed door of the Trent Bridge dressing-room after the surrender ten days ago that has rendered this last match irrelevant to the series. "I was very straightforward," he said. "It was unacceptable to be bowled out like that."

"We have said time and again that we must eradicate the bad sessions that are costing us matches. It is taking time — more time than I had hoped and more time than most people probably think we should have."

Robert Croft was yesterday released from England's 14-strong party, making way for Phil Tufnell's first Test of summer. Tufnell has been selected in each of the six Test squads, but been sent back to his county before all five

previous games. "It's been a strange year," he said yesterday, "just driving up and down all the time."

Tufnell, in jocular mood, reflected on the fact that his only Test cricket in the past three years has been played overseas. "I must be a good tourist," he said. On being told a rumour that the Australians — especially the Waugh brothers — enjoy his bowling, he recalled his most recent Test against them. "Adelaide, last tour. I think we won... I think I got Mark Waugh out for two."

Devon Malcolm missed yesterday's training session for a benefit lunch, of all things, but he definitely plays tomorrow. The remaining doubt involves Dean Headley, who is still struggling with a bruised right heel. Peter Martin will stay with the squad on standby.

Shaun Young, recruited from his county season with Gloucestershire, will make his Test debut for Australia.

Lloyd's verdict, page 48  
Hunt's return, page 40  
ITC details, page 41

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